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Photographic dissemination
iterations of difference in the text of landscape and photographic writing

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For Lindsey, without whom none of this would have been possible.

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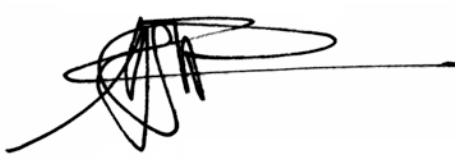
Declaration

I declare that the following thesis is entirely my own work and that it has not been previously accepted in any former application for a research degree. All quotations have been distinguished by quotation marks or indentations to the text and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.

Candidate's signature:



Abstract

This thesis challenges the notion that landscape can be seen or thought as a picture i.e. in terms of its modern definition and etymology. In questioning the modern definition of landscape the thesis asks a number of specific questions: does the etymology of landscape yield any latent meanings which may be profitably explored? Can these be used as the basis for a new formulation of landscape i.e. 'landtext' or landscape *as* text? The thesis goes on to consider what the implications of this are.

Importantly, this thesis is practice based which has entailed that the work is interdisciplinary in nature, the working method amounts to a dialogue between disciplines. The practice with which the thesis concerns itself is photography and it has been a pivotal component of this research to consider photography in terms of Jacques Derrida's expanded field of writing. The photograph as a motif of the metaphysics of presence, a Barthesean emanation, is presented in relation to Derrida's grammatology, or generalised system of difference. Critically this thesis asks is photography a form of writing? If so, what are the consequences of this for the relation between photographic writing, or as it is termed here, *photogrammatology* and landtext? The thesis explores whether

intertextuality adequately describe the nexus of relations between each of the systems of difference.

Due to the practice led nature of the project, a significant consideration has been the implication of a relational, text based understanding of practice for the viewer or reader in the gallery. To this end the thesis investigates relational aesthetics *vis à vis* text with a view to theorising photographic practice in a gallery setting in terms of a text which the reader enters. In addition, the role of light in the intertextual relation is considered, especially with respect to the articulation of difference.

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Introduction

The point of departure for this research project is an existing photographic practice through which I am largely concerned with borderland spaces, an abiding fascination with boundary places such as roundabouts, roadside verges and leisure spaces: golf course, park and such like. The motivation for undertaking this research project is to build a framework which may facilitate better photographic outputs and to develop a practice which is research driven. In short, I undertake this project in order to be a better, more rigorous visual practitioner. At the outset I have a number of frustrations in mind, namely the narrow conceptions involved in our everyday commerce with landscapes, that is to say, our general understanding of landscape concurs with its modern definition: it is a view, a view of natural scenery. This conception of landscape is too limited, and indeed limiting, when considered in relation to my current photographic practice, which meditates upon the humanly inscribed land around us and wants to call them landscape(s)[1].

[1] Lucy Lippard writes: "Concerned photographers have to compete with *Arizona Highways* and the popular scenic calendars beloved of environmental fundraisers, which have been dubbed 'eco-porn'. And they must deal with the higher toned versions made popular by Ansel Adams' glorious and misleading images of the West, which succeed the tough, functional and also grand nineteenth-century expeditionary photographs." 'Outside (But Not Necessarily Beyond) the Landscape' *Aperture* 150 Winter 1998 p.60

However, this naming of landscape cannot come at all costs: it is critical that this exploration aims to avoid metaphoric extensions of landscape, my interest in the land's-scape, the shape of the land, is very real. I wonder: how might we articulate these *in-between* places? Indeed, a rehabilitation of the word *landscape* is a significant place to start. Therefore, I will begin this thesis by asking: to what extent can the modern definition of landscape be challenged? Are there latent meanings which can be usefully employed to enrich our understanding of landscape? And ultimately for this thesis, can these latencies provide new openings for practice? The method that I will employ will be an etymological overview of the word itself through which I will uncover the etymological oversights of the modern definition.

One of my enduring interests as a practitioner has been the jostle of different activities on the land's surface, each leaving its trace on the land. This notion of the humanly inscribed landscape contributes to a palimpsestic overlay which disciplines such as archaeology unpeel in their scientific explorations. Taking my cue from cultural geographers such as James Duncan and Nancy Duncan, I intend to investigate whether we can think about this overlaid landscape as a kind of text. Although, for Duncan and Duncan, this way of articulating landscape is metaphorical,[2] I will go further and look at landscape *as* text. However, not in terms of an ontology of landscape, but as a critical means of understanding our relationship with it. Landscape as text is the way we make landscape, both physically through inscription and as a characterisation of our experience of it: we read it both sensibly and intelligibly.

[2] James Duncan and Nancy Duncan 'Ideology and Bliss: the secret landscapes of Roland Barthes' in *Writing Worlds: Discourse, text and metaphor in the representation of landscape* Trevor J. Barnes and James Duncan (eds)

The work of Roland Barthes will play a key role in this thesis: he is a theorist with whom I experience an affinity, especially in terms of his writing on text and early writing on photography. Whereas his last work, *Camera Lucida,* is a text which I consider to be a misrepresentation of photographic practice, a declaration which will be explored and proven in chapters two and three. The duality found in Barthes' writing will therefore work as a backdrop to this study. I do not intend to bring this right to the fore, rather it will act as a ground which informs the course of the work. Our earliest encounter with Barthes will be relative to the discussions on text during this first chapter, subsequent to which I will ask: what are the consequences of thinking landscape as text? In particular, in terms of our experience of landscape, but also the consequent impact upon photographic practice that this suggests. Indeed, if landscape can be configured intellectually and experientially as text, how should we articulate the relationship(s) between 'landtext' and photography?

In order to begin to formulate an answer to this question, it will be necessary to situate myself in the general discourse on photography. Therefore, during the second chapter I will investigate the 'natural' with respect to photographic images, in particular, the realist notion that they can be considered to be natural images. In research which preceded this project I investigated the transparency thesis in the analytical tradition of philosophy; to an extent, this subject is continued here, albeit from an entirely different viewpoint. This change in perspective is prompted, in part, by my decision to pursue a practice-led approach to the research process. To work against what Jan Baetens describes as

> the professionalization of the discourse on photography…the appropriation of the discourse…by strictly scholarly academics. The

> discourse is then no longer held by photographers themselves, who are excluded from the very discussions of their own work.[3]

It is important to note that this work is undertaken within an academic context which enables my work as a photographer to be part of the process. Additionally, I intend to focus my attention largely on works of philosophy which are considered to fall within the continental tradition. However, I am mindful that this distinction, like many rigid definitions, is not always clearly defensible. Notwithstanding this, the second chapter asks: is the subject incarnated in the photograph, as Roland Barthes would have it, or can we think of photographs as *imbroglios*, complex objects in which the photographer and the apparatus are imbricated? It is therefore my intention to investigate the writing of Vilèm Flusser and Bruno Latour as counterpoints to Barthes' quasi-theological reading of photography.

We might argue that the most direct consequence of Barthes' *Camera Lucida* is the configuration of photography in terms of an economy of presence: the subject is brought to presence in or through the photograph. The third chapter of this thesis will set about an exploration of photographic presence and its parallels with Ferdinand de Saussure's conviction regarding the proximity of thought and speech, that is, the natural unity of the sign. The photograph's being-as-presence will be considered with particular reference to the philosophical work of Jacques Derrida and the art criticism of Rosalind Krauss. The key question of this chapter will be: can we think about photography *in general* as a practice of writing? If so, what are the attendant consequences of this in terms of photographic being-as-presence? In addition, if photographic images

[3] Jan Baetens *Photography Theory* James Elkins (ed) New York; London: Routledge, 2007 p. 71

are considered to be part of a general system of difference, rather than tokens in an economy of presence, can we articulate photographic practice as writing? And, what impact might this have on the relation between landtext and photography?

In order to tease out the relationship between landtext and photography, it will be necessary to return to the implied binarism of photography, the inside/outside of camera and world, to address a doubt about the nature of this relationship. Therefore, one of the questions at hand in the fourth chapter will be: to what extent does the lens act as a barrier, an intervening surface, and indeed, what import does the answer to this have on the thesis? Does the intrinsic/extrinsic prevail as an *informative* binarism in photographic practice, can we take this inside/outside opposition to be a product of photography as *physis in différance*, a product of what might called parergonality? As an inevitable consequence of our interest in the parergon, a further question arises: does the notion that photographs are textual challenge the photograph as aesthetic object?

In articulating landscape as textual surfaces and photographs as the product of a textual practice, the inferential answer to the question regarding the relationship between landtext and *photogrammatology* is that it is *intertextual*. Therefore, in order to test this question, different theorisations of the intertext will be considered, from Julia Kristeva to Roland Barthes in addition to Jacques Derrida's notion of textuality. Following on from this, I intend to ask: if the lens is one of the producers of parergonality, or put more simply, if the lens *opens* difference, how are we to theorise light with regard to all of this? Looking chiefly at Cathryn Vasseleu, I will go on to explore the role that light plays in the putatively

intertextual relationship between the two systems of writing looked at in this thesis: landscapes and photography.

The final chapter of the thesis will investigate more fully the consequences of thinking landscape and photography as generalised systems of difference. Returning to the work of Roland Barthes, I will once again question text, but this time from the point of view of text as *productivity*. The parallel between Barthesean notions of text and Nicolas Bourriaud's writing in *Relational Aesthetics* will be considered, bringing text and relational systems of difference into the gallery context. I will ask: to what extent can we think about the gallery space as relational, that is a space which is open, which encourages textual relationships that are woven in their nature? Considering the gallery in these terms also enables us to ask: is the gallery an intertextual space and what is the significance of this for the reader/viewer of the work? To attempt to answer this in Barthesean terms I will look at his writing in 'Theory of the Text' which is concerned with the loss of the subject in text, a process which Barthes refers to as 'significance'[4].

The ideas of loss and 'signifiance' will then be explored in relation to landscape. It is my intention, at the close of the thesis, to return to where I began, with landscape, in order to ask: what impact does the theme of difference have on our understanding of landscape? Following readings on ideas relating to difference, text, writing and landscape, I will explore the conception of landscape in terms of the textual sublime. Is landscape in difference, landscape as text under the ever-changing touch of light to

[4] Roland Barthes 'Theory of the Text' in *Untying the text: a post-structuralist reader* Robert Young (ed) London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981 p.40

be theorised as an instance of the textual sublime: in other words, is landtext always, already the difference of itself?

Chapter 1

Landscape: from picture to text

I An Overview of the Terrain

II Re-picturing Landscape: uncovering etymological oversights

III Other Places: Towards Landscapes of difference

IV Landscape as Text

V Concluding remarks

I An Overview of the Terrain

I begin this chapter with a question in mind: what do I understand landscape to be? If we come to the question etymologically, we seem to find a straightforward answer: a landscape is a picture or it is a view; it is a picture of scenery or scenery seen as a picture. However, this does not fully answer my question. The idea that landscape is a view, a picture of a picture, raises still more questions, such as, where is the edge of the view and how do we define its parameters? At what point does landscape return to land? Additionally, in calling certain areas landscapes, we are confronted by the idea that certain parts of the world are aesthetically privileged; they are special tracts of land, to be seen from somewhere.

This etymological conception of landscape is partial insofar as it takes the modern origins of the word to be definitive and indeed the landscape *itself* to be definable. In addition, the notion that landscapes are pictures is partial in terms of its inadequacy in the face of the richness of experience in landscape, the sense that we can be both within as well as distanced from the landscape. With these reservations about 'landscape as view' in mind, I intend to probe a little more deeply into the etymology of the word itself in order to flush out any latencies which may be profitably explored. Part of this etymological investigation will be a look at the writing of John Brinkerhoff Jackson and his notion that landscape is a *synthetic* space. For Jackson, the landscape is a collection of lands tied together, and this interweaving of social spaces resonates with an entirely different reading of landscape i.e. landscape is a text not a picture.

To conceive of landscape as text is not entirely new, it is an idea which has been theorised by cultural geographers. However, this has tended to

be a metaphorical description, a generative metaphor for landscape, which I consider merits much deeper enquiry. Firstly, it should be investigated in terms of our general experience of being immersed in landscape and secondly, on a more personal level, the enquiry will help me to come to an understanding of my own photographic landscape practice. A significant approach that this research project has taken, is the photographic investigation of the physical landscape as a process or means of questioning the idea landscape, in both images and words. My research is informed by a practice led enquiry into the landscape around us, and the extent to which it is culturally actualised. So, what do we mean by landscape; is it tangible, or just an outmoded term of reference? To this end, I will briefly look at Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes with a view to progressing in some depth the final stages of the shift from landscape as picture, to landscape as text.

In everyday speech it is hard to dissociate landscapes from views and pictures. Is this simply a matter of convention, or is there something latent in the word which makes us susceptible to these interpretations? That is to say, does the word landscape *mean* view or picture? In 'Writing Moods' James Elkins argues that scholarship of gardens is less rigorously practised than that of art history, therefore thinking the garden has a mildly soporific effect: an incitement to reverie. "[O]ur writing," argues Elkins, "evinces a mental state close to both hypnosis and dreaming."[5] I wonder if we are walking in a state of reverie in the landscape, content to think of the landscape as a pleasing view whilst there are historical, etymological, aesthetic and political positions secreted in the term which we are too hypnotised to recognise?

[5] James Elkins 'Writing Moods' in *Landscape Theory* James Elkins and Rachel Ziady DeLue (eds,) New York; Abingdon, Oxon: 2008 p.81

To a photographer, the question of the landscape does seem to be particularly vexed. I intend to touch this apologist stance towards landscape a little later, but here are some words from *New Scottish Photography*, discussing the work of Peter Cattrell which point to this sense of discomfort and anxiety:

> Like any contemporary landscape photographer working in a representational or 'straight' manner, Peter Cattrell is aware that it is, ideologically-speaking, a problematic undertaking. For it is argued that every manner of edifying representation, from an early nineteenth-century oil painting of a misty glen, to the kind of thing that adorns postcards, simply reinforces a cosy, complicit view of nature that denies the present day realities of the new landscape mythology of corporate grouse shoots and NATO.[6]

Depicting the natural landscape (if any such thing could even be said to exist) does not interest me in my role as a photographic practitioner. My principal visual interest has been human intervention in, and relationship with, the land, especially through the creation of pseudo-natural leisure spaces and the intaglio marks left on the land by work activities such as farming, peat cutting, quarrying and so on: landscape, in this sense is a mediation between leisure and work. Earlier preoccupations of my visual practice were borderland spaces: almost non-places, such as planted roundabouts, edges of towns, parks, gardens, golf courses. Examples, I observe with hindsight, of Michel Foucault's notion of the *heterotopia*.[7]

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[6] David Brittain, *New Scottish Photography: a critical review of the work of seventeen photographers,* Edinburgh: Scottish National Portrait Gallery, 1990, p.102

[7] These borderland spaces are *heterotopian* insofar as they are places of difference, or Otherness. They are Other places, places of leisure, or collections (the garden), or boundary spaces which are articulated by the convergence of various social spaces. In the case of large pedestrian access roundabouts, they have no real function other than

However, my current overarching frame of reference is landscape and the man-made. The question of whether these spaces belong to the landscape genre is not at issue here: I will take as a start point W.J.T.Mitchell's notion that the "[l]andscape is not a genre of art but a medium."[8] The landscape is both medium and message. Landscapes have different meanings for different people: landscapes are always already representations. Through this chapter, I will move away from the notion of the landscape as a picture, seen from a particular place, towards a conception of the landscape as a kind of text, a palimpsest of marks and traces of social activity. The landscape in this sense can be thought as a surface upon which culture writes itself, indeed, as is consonant with the notion of palimpsest, the landscape is always already written. One cultural practice overwrites another, accreting the trace of these activities: the landscape is a collage of traces, overlaid on the surface of the land.

I therefore intend to focus my attention away from the 'edifying representation' of the landscape, towards the everyday landscape. The everyday landscape which, we might argue, is a cultural representation. In 'Frameworks for Cultural Landscape Study', Paul Groth writes

> For writers in cultural landscape studies, the term *landscape* means more than a pleasing view of scenery. *Landscape* denotes the interaction of people and place…All human interaction with nature can be considered as cultural landscape: the high-style cathedral or

to pass through but are often transformed into leisure spaces by the addition of seasonal planting and benches.

[8] W.J.T. Mitchell 'Imperial Landscape' in *Landscape and Power* (Second Edition) Chicago, Ill.; London: University of Chicago Press, 2002 p.5

> office tower, as well as the Depression-era Hooverville hut, a farmer's barbed-wire fence, or a kitchen garden.[9]

For cultural geographers landscape is culturally actualised. The study of the cultural landscape is the study of human relationships with nature: the term landscape denotes human intervention in the land *as nature*. It is as a result of the manipulations of humankind that nature is *cultured* as landscape. Whilst a deep and systematic study of nature is far beyond what I have set out to achieve here (it would be both voluminous and all consuming), the problematic of nature does require some comment, if not by way of the philosophical clarification of the matter, but at the very least, an analysis of my emerging attitude to nature, if only in semantic terms. However, as we proceed through the thesis, it should become clear that ideas about nature inform the argument, specifically in relation to text, which we shall come to in this chapter in due course.

Considered in the terms above, the representation of the landscape through painting, and by extension, the 'landscape as view', is the figuration of man's relationship with nature. The material landscape, a surface which indicates human interactions with nature, implies that landscape is a mode of mediation[10] between culture and nature, either in terms of landscape overwriting, or landscape as a play of Derridean differencing: landscape writing culture, writing nature. I intend to explore this more fully later, but, for the time being at least, I shall observe that the

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[9] Paul Groth 'Frameworks for Cultural Landscape Study' in *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes* Paul Groth and Todd W. Bressi (eds) New Haven Conn.; London: Yale University Press, c1997 p.1

[10] W.J.T. Mitchell: "Landscape is a natural scene mediated by culture. It is both represented and presented space, both a signifier and a signified, both a frame and what a frame contains, both a real place and its simulacrum, both a package and the commodity inside the package." 'Imperial Landscape' *Landscape and Power* Chicago, Ill.; London: University of Chicago Press, 2002 p.5

differentiation between culture and nature follows a structuralist binarism. That is, we come to understand our human selves, society etc, in opposition to nature. Culture is incomprehensible without a tacit reference to nature. It was the structuralist linguist Roman Jackobson who wrote

> In oppositive duality, if one of the terms is given, then the other, though not present, is evoked in thought. To the idea of white there is opposed only that of black, to the idea of beauty that of ugliness, to the idea of large that of small, to the idea of closed that of open, and so on. Opposites are so intimately interconnected that the appearance of one of them inevitably elicits the other.[11]

But, as Jackobson and Jacques Derrida remind us, paradigmatic oppositions such as white and black, culture and nature, are rarely neutral, that is ideologically equally weighted. Either of the terms is likely to be *naturalised* according to the dominant ideology of a given culture. This is to say, the unmarked term will be taken to represent the universal, natural position. The dominant term implies priority over its opposite, it is hierarchically elevated, whilst the marked term is Other, outside of the universalising category.

Therefore, for human society, culture is the dominant term (especially in terms of classic Cartesian binarism which takes the mind and body to be opposed dualities). Nature fulfils the needs of culture from raw materials to the provision of a space for leisure. Man as culture is systematically posited as the paradigmatic opposite of nature, and, argue feminist theorists, woman.

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[11] Roman Jakobson cited by Daniel Chandler in *Semiotics: the basics* 2nd edition, New York; Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2007 p.91

We Won't Play Nature to Your Culture, Barbara Kruger, 1983

Man, in biblical theology, is prior to woman and the ideal cultural subject (male) posits woman as nature, subjugated under the power of the male gaze. Although a feminist critique of scopic regimes, including the thesis on the male gaze, is well beyond what I hope to achieve here, the relationship between vision and power, and the disembodied 'cool' gaze of the ideal (male) viewer, does inform my thesis. Whilst I do not intend to subject the seer/seen dyad to exhaustive scrutiny, by the very nature of this project: a photographic enquiry (with its attendant ocular metaphor) into the landscape (the body of the land as *seen* object), certain binary oppositions will inevitably require some thought along the way.

In order to critically review the optical objectifications of photography (taken to be a Sontagian mode of seeing) the thesis will take the position that photography is a form of writing. I will also present an argument which investigates the premise that the landscape can be thought about in terms of text. Taken as such we might argue that the text of landscape is rewritten photographically, landscapes are reinscribed through the photographic register. Consequently, I will explore the question whether

photographic practice may be described as being *intertextual* in nature. However, such conclusions are still a long way off and therefore this first chapter will form an exploration of the idea that the landscape can be taken to be a text. Firstly, I intend to look at the modern etymological conventions of the word landscape. Next, I will explore an alternative to this, presented by the American landscape theorist John Brinkerhoff Jackson. I then intend to investigate the word *text* and will consider the tensions between text, writing and landscape, reframing Jackson's definition of 'the word itself' in the context of Roland Barthes' ideas of the semiotics and Text to be found in 'Myth Today' and 'From Work to Text.' A short exegesis of some of Ferdinand de Saussure's ideas from the *Course in General Lingustics* will provide some background to the Barthesean Text.

II Re-picturing Landscape

According to modern etymological sources, the word landscape was first seen in the English language during the late sixteenth century. It was a term exported from the Dutch language, *landskip* literally *landship*, across the sea to England. *Landskip* was a vessel which carried the associations of picturing, which have remained in the language ever since. For *landskip* was a pictorial representation of natural inland scenery, it was a painter's term meaning the picture of the view rather than the view itself. It was not until the seventeenth century that views of natural scenes began to be called landscapes. However, by this point the precedent had been set: to talk of landscapes, is to talk of pictures; either pictures of the land, or the land itself seen as a picture.

Woman at a Window, Caspar David Friedrich ,1822

The scholar, Thomas Blount writes of landscape in his *Glossographica* of 1656:

> Lanskip, Parergon, Paisage, or By-work, which is an expressing of the Land, by Hills, Woods, Castles, Valleys, Rivers, Cities, etc as far as may be shewed in our Horizon. All that which in a picture is not of the body or argument thereof is Landskip, Parergon or bywork.[12]

[12] Thomas Blount cited by John Fowles in *Fay Godwin: Land*, London: Heinemann, 1985 p.xv

Blount elucidates the conception that the landscape is a staging device for the accomplishments of man: the landscape is a bywork, a background for human activity. Landscape considered in this way amounts to sceneography: a stage set for the dramatisations of culture. The landscape as natural place is turned into a spectacle to be seen from somewhere. Thus the word comes to the twenty-first century reader replete with the convention of a viewing subject surveying a viewed object: the landscape as picture is the objectification of the land by a viewer set at a distance from the scene. The spectacle of nature is seen from a privileged vantage point, that is, outside of nature: a cultural vantage point. Indeed, the modern definition of the syllable *-scape* is that it enables a combinative noun formation which denotes "a view or representation of a view"[13].

The landscape, aesthetically privileged nature with the idea of the ideal viewer written in, is Other to our daily lives. The implied viewer looking at the landscape makes the landscape into a spectacle: the act of looking is a gesture of re-viewing an ideal scene, which according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is *natural* (it is not worked). As Raymond Williams writes:

> A working country is hardly ever a landscape. The very idea of landscape implies separation and observation.[14]

One might conjecture that based on this assumption, the landscape is a place of leisure and escape. The landscape, other to the working countryside, is a place to which one travels in a touristic or leisure mode, to observe and enjoy. This notion of the landscape is separate from the

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[13] *The Concise Oxford Dictio*nary 9th Edition Della Thomson (ed) Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995 p.1231

[14] Raymond Williams *The Country and the City* London: Chatto & Windus, 1973 p.120

urban and also the rural. It seems that, under this conception, the landscape entails non-working untamed wilderness: the landscape is a place of Otherness, separate from our commonplace lives.

Indeed, this idea of the landscape as a picture, a privileged view with an implied viewer, precipitates an engagement with nature which is firmly located in an artistic tradition, that is, in terms of landscape, nature is cultural from the outset. John Brinkerhoff Jackson writes that:

> It was [the artist's] task to take the forms and colo[u]rs and spaces in front of him – mountains, rivers, forest, fields, and so on – and compose them so that they made a work of art…the word gradually changed in meaning. First it meant a picture of a view; then the view itself. We went into the country and discovered beautiful views, always remembering the criteria of landscape beauty as established by critics and artists. Finally…we undertook to make over a piece of ground so that it resembled a pastoral landscape in the shape of a garden or park.[15]

Thus if we are to follow the developments of the word landscape in the period after the sixteenth century, we could say that nature is judged and engaged with according to the aesthetic principles of art. The landscape, thought of in terms of the picturing of nature is very much a cultural product: landscape is modelled on art rather than nature.

However, the notion of the landscape as privileged place is by no means modern. It has been a feature of European culture since the first century BC. The *Idylls* of the Greek poet Theocritus (c. 308-240 BC) celebrated

[15] John Brinkerhoff Jackson *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, c1984 p.3

spring landscapes featuring Sicilian herdsmen, far from the city: pastoral, blissful and peaceful. These idyllic scenes are said to initiate the *locus amoneus,* or 'lovely place', which becomes a major theme for landscape artists. The pastoral celebration of the place of agriculture, which extols the virtues of a simple life, reputedly begins with the Roman writer Virgil writing the *Georgics* late in the first century BC. Whilst it is not until the seventeenth century AD that the aesthetic categories of the landscape are more clearly defined, the idea that the landscape has a taxonomy either as 'lovely place' or, place of agriculture emerges in this early period. It appears that the appreciation of the landscape, mediated by art and literature is not just a sixteenth century phenomenon. The notion that the landscape is not part of the main body or argument but a background for narrative derives from literature as generative of the major themes concerning landscapes. The landscape was a stage instruction for the eye.

The propensity to divide of the landscape into a hierarchy of types[16] demonstrates that our engagement with the land is fragmentary and can be easily characterised. This general differentiation of the landscape from land argues in favour of a privileged view, based on cultural assumptions. For example, the differentiation between countryside and town, the aesthetic properties of particular landscapes and the extent to which certain landscapes embody particular cultural ideals and ideas. Thus the landscape is classified according to historical and social contexts and our tastes begin to inform the view. As Nicholas Green writes in his Introduction to *The Spectacle of Nature*:

[16] Ermeonville, an encyclopaedic garden comprised of landscape types i.e. Arcady, Elysium, wilderness (désert), farm, forest, castle, dolmen, château etc. This was a picturesque garden, landscaped after the estate in a novel by Jean Jacques Rousseau where he eventually died. Much of it is now privately owned but some is retained by the state as the Parc Jean Jacques Rousseau.

> My reading of the view through the window suggests that the sense to be made of something called nature is already shaped by a complex network of expectation and interpretation grounded in social experience.[17]

Indeed, as Green points out, the ideas that we have about nature and place, inform the "kinds of cultural map we carry around in our heads and act out in our daily lives."[18] I would argue that the classification of landscape in terms of its aesthetic properties, or the effect that landscapes have on viewers, and the idea that landscapes are scenes which imply the presence of an 'ideal' viewer, all contribute to a cultural map of the landscape which we carry with us, a mental map, which we could argue, disregards the full complexity of the actual landscape. In a sense, this particular cultural map is of landscape as aesthetically privileged; other to our daily lives, a place of aesthetic contemplation. But the landscape is a profoundly social space, seen and described in contested terms by various viewers, and therefore it is my intention to challenge this idea and to investigate alternative typologies of the landscape which typify my concerns as a practising photographer.

We might argue that it would be better to dispense with the word landscape altogether. That 'landscape', the word itself, is problematic and has no real bearing as the term may be substituted by a range of alternatives: terrain; environment; or space. Landscape expresses a kind of heterogeneity of space which these terms perhaps do not. Indeed, as we shall see from the etymological analysis of the word which follows,

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[17] Green, Nicholas, *The Spectacle of Nature: Landscape and Bourgeois Culture in Nineteenth-Century France* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990 p.1
[18] Ibid p.4

landscape is not explicitly connected either to pictures or even to nature.[19] There are latencies in the word landscape, which provide inferences that differ significantly from the words 'space', 'terrain', 'environment'. As I hope to demonstrate in due course, these etymological effects are fertile grounds for thought which makes the case for an approach which rehabilitates the word landscape, rather than simply substituting it for another term entirely.

The term landscape is often rejected because it is so laden with meanings relating to artistic practice and the picturesque. However, the word landscape denoting firstly a picture, then a view of natural scenery, was, according to John Brinkerhoff Jackson, *re*-introduced into English in the sixteenth century. He argues that the word was first brought to Britain sometime after the fifth century AD by the Angles, Saxons, Danes and Jutes and its early usage has another sense entirely. According to Jackson's account, landscape is a compound of land and *-scape*, which he subjects to a close etymological analysis in 'The Word Itself' from his book *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*. I do not intend to represent his entire argument here, suffice it to say, land has a wide variety of etymological beginnings from: soil; sovereign territory; strip division of a field; to a ridge in a ploughed field. Land means a defined space, an area on the surface of the world which may be ploughed, grassed and grazed, or ruled over. It is a

[19] Even in Dutch landscape paintings of the sixteenth century, the very era of the etymology of the word we are about to explore, the view was rarely if ever entirely 'natural'. It would often include a cityscape, the landowner's prospect or the sea with trading vessels. Dutch landscapes were far more than pictures of natural scenery.

> remarkably versatile word, but always implying a space defined by people, and one that could be described in legal terms.[20]

Anne Whiston Spirn argues that land is a word for both the physical place and its population. Thus landscape ties together people and place and the suffix *–scape* in Nordic and Germanic languages is strongly associated with shaping: landscape is both place shaped by people, and people shaped by place. Although the second syllable of the compound (i.e. *scape*) resonates with the idea of space, etymologically it has no connection with this concept. David Hay observes in *Landscape Theory* that

> those misunderstandings of the word *landscape* are actually a double false etymology. When people define landscape, they actually take *–scape* as *–scope*, as if it pertained to vision. But it does not.[21]

However, certain theorists argue that in spite of this philological misreading of the word, landscape does pertain to vision insofar as it is intimately bound to the notion of either the picture or the prospect. Kenneth R. Olwig points out that he agrees in principle with Hay's statement, although he argues that it is important not to forget that the Netherlandish landscape artist was indeed associating the word landscape with vision. The artist apprehends the land from a suitable vantage point, for the purposes of picturing, the picture in turn embodies a set of ideological assumptions.

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[20] John Brinkerhoff Jackson *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, c1984 pp.6-7

[21] David Hay in 'The Art Seminar' *Landscape Theory* James Elkins and Rachel Ziady DeLue (eds) New York; Abingdon, Oxon: 2008 p. 93

> Yet, insofar as the early landscape painters of the low lands did paint regions (in the sense of *country* or *land*) as seen in prospect, they were nevertheless engaging visually with the *idea* represented by the suffix *–scape* at a time when *–scape* did not signifiy *–scope*, but something quite different. The nether lands artists (*sic*)…gains a wide prospect over the country below, which gives an overall view of the character, or *shape*, of the land that would not be visible closer up. *–Scape* became identified with *–scope* because the distant view provided one way of abstracting the abstract quality of a *region*, *country*, or *land's-scape*.[22]

Thus *–scape* collapses into *–scope* as it refers to the ideology of ownership and the view: the notion of the prospect. The distanced view thus enables the artist to foreground the "abstract quality" of the "*land's-scape*"[23]: existing conceptions about the land, i.e. ownership, cultural difference, identity, nationhood. Inserting distance between the viewer and the land shows the distinctive characteristics (natural and cultural) of a region: the distanciation enables the *land's-scape* to be revealed. This implies that the landscape *is objectifiable*: the viewing subject has the landscape in the centre of his vision. The subject (in Descartes' terms, implicitly male) holds the landscape in the cone of his visual field and this distance separates the viewer and the viewed into subject and object: the prospect is a matter of ownership.

The prospect is thus connected to the revelation of the land's shape, the visual perception of the shape of the land, rather than the idea of landscape as view. The *–scape* of landscape needs to be disassociated from *–scope*. Indeed in Old English the suffix (from the Germanic *–scipe*)

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[22] Kenneth R. Olwig 'The "*Actual Landscape," or Actual Landscapes' Landscape Theory* James Elkins and Rachel Ziady DeLue (eds) New York; Abingdon, Oxon: 2008 pp. 163-164
[23] Ibid.

also has an association with collectives and groupings of people. *–Ship* is defined by the Concise Oxford English Dictionary as "the collective individuals of a group (*membership*)"[24]. J. B. Jackson argues that the suffix once meant "a composition of similar objects as when we speak of a fellowship or membership."[25] In Old English *–scape* denotes a variety of elements collected in the environment. He cites the related English word "sheaf" as an example: a sheaf is a bundle or collection of similar stalks. Jackson writes:

> It is as much as if the words had been coined when people began to see the complexities of the man-made world. Thus *homescape* meant what we would now call a household, and a word of the same sort which we still use – township – once meant a collection of "tuns" or farmsteads.
>
> Taken apart in this manner, landscape appears to be an easily understood word: a collection of lands.[26]

So from this derivation of the compound of two words, we can infer that the landscape is not a fragment of the world which can be taken in at a glance, but a place shaped by people, a collection of lands. This much older use of the word suggests the division of land based around social uses, and as Jackson intimates, this could be demonstrative of a human response to the increasing complexity of the man-altered environment. According to his account the landscape is a *vernacular* space.

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[24] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, Ninth Edition, Della Thomson (ed) Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995 p.1278
[25] John Brinkerhoff Jackson *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, c1984 p.7
[26] Ibid

Thus in these divergent definitions of landscape, i.e. particular place *versus* general sign, there are a number of issues at play. The older sense of landscape: the interconnectedness of people and place; has been erased from modern dictionaries in an effort to counteract the conflicts in the meaning of the word. Olwig cites Pierre Bourdieu who writes that the dictionary

> assembles, by scholarly recording, the totality of the *linguistic resources* accumulated in the course of time and, in particular, all the possible uses of the same word (or all the possible expressions of the same sense), juxtaposing uses that are socially at odds, and even mutually exclusive (to the point of marking those which exceed the bounds of acceptability with a sign of exclusion such as *Obs*., *Coll*. or *Sl*.) It thereby gives a fairly exact image of language as Saussure understands it, "the sum of individual treasuries of language," which is predisposed to fulfil the functions of a "universal" code.[27]

The overlay of a certain sense of the word landscape in the modern dictionary exemplifies the manner in which particular cultural ideas are enabled to dominate: the absence of an old etymology of landscape traces the dominant ideology. The dictionary as a model of Saussurean universality underplays the discordances of meaning in order to obfuscate the significance of contradictory *parole(s)*. Thus, using the definition of landscape as an example, the modern dictionary is *logocentric* in its tendency to marginalise discordant meanings. This has given rise to a fixed, yet entirely fallible and fractional definition of the word landscape. Landscape, in the modern sense, is laden with the 'imperialism' of the

[27] Pierre Bourdieu cited by Kenneth R. Olwig in *Landscape Theory* James Elkins and Rachel Ziady DeLue (eds) New York; Abingdon, Oxon: 2008 p.160

view and the ideology of prospect and ownership. The sign landscape is *naturalised* as a view of scenery.

However, the notion of manmade spaces which articulate boundaries and strata, overlaid on and in the land, opens the idea of the landscape as laminated, worked over: a changing collage of the traces of different uses. Landscape is a patchwork of spaces, the borderlands between different zones of practice are in certain places clearly defined, but in others they are liminal.

> A landscape is not a natural feature of the environment but a *synthetic* space, a man-made system of spaces superimposed on the face of the land, functioning and evolving not according to natural laws but to serve a community – for the collective character of the landscape is one thing that all generations and all points of view have agreed upon.[28]

The evolution of landscape is not natural but cultural: the engaging point about landscape is that it is both the product of a collective and a collection of spaces. The function of the landscape is to serve the community who lives upon the land. But if we rethink the 'collective character' in terms of the etymology of the *–ship* of landscape, it is the relativity of the collection which is important i.e. a membership is constituted by particular individuals. Thus place is defined in terms of the relational character of landscape. The documentation (recollecting) of these places is a kind of chorography of synthetic spaces, which in some sense at least are also collections in their own right.

[28] Ibid p.8

Indeed if we are to reflect upon the British landscape, there is very little about it which could be described as natural or original. Since Neolithic times, the land has been manipulated and transformed, by the accretion of traces of human activities such as farming and homemaking. The surface of the world is subject to relative re-arrangements through seasonal variation in agriculture or other local occurrences such as felling, quarrying and road building. The landscape is the material vestige of processes of change, both natural and man induced; it is the tablet upon which we trace our culture in the very broadest sense. It is through cultural activities such as farming, sport and travel that we inscribe ourselves in and on the land.

We discussed the culturing of nature earlier in this chapter, and an interesting example of this cyclical reference from historic landscape to art to contemporary landscape, is the conservation of the Danish landscape around Copenhagen:

> Contemporary Danish landscapes…are being shaped today by nineteenth-century paintings of the Danish "Golden Age," which once were shaped, in turn, by the character of the rural landscape near Copenhagen. Take the area around Lejre, a cultural landscape that was idealized by Golden Age painters and celebrated by poets, that now is protected by law as scenery of historic national significance. Lejre is now a bedroom community, but certain farms must remain in crops, even though owned by a doctor or businessman.[29]

[29] Anne Whiston Spirn *Landscape Theory* James Elkins and Rachel Ziady DeLue (eds) New York; Abingdon, Oxon: 2008 pp.110-111

This example of the conserved landscape of Lejre, re-pictures the land so that the actual landscape is a representation of a socially defined reality derived through reference to art history, which in turn references literature. The actual landscape of Lejre could be thought of as a picture of a picture. However, under Jackson's challenge, the landscape as picture has given way to an idea of landscape which is a collection of man-made spaces. The landscape of Ljere is a potent reminder of the very historicity of the land, the notion that the landscape is culturally inscribed. However, rather than describing this landscape as a picture of a picture, it should be thought as a re-representation: a palimpsestic overlay.

The *synthetic* space, overlaid on the land's surface is formed by activities which rewrite the appearance of the landscape. Thus the landscape in Jackson's account is dynamic. The unique sense of place (*genius loci*) is informed by this collective tracery, yet it is also undermined or erased by it. If landscape is dynamic, always moving, there is no genius loci, perhaps there is a moment of uniqueness, but no sense in which place endures. Therefore, natural landscape is not marked out as culture's Other: landscape is not natural but *made*. Additionally, Jackson's definition of the landscape proposes the idea that place is a set of collections, collections in space.

III Other Places: Towards Landscapes of Difference

It may be argued that this line of argumentation amounts to a denial of natural landscapes, although the influence of human intervention means that there are indeed very few unspoiled places on the globe. However, the veneration of wild places has its own history, which is intimately connected with changing ideas about the city and travel. In short,

nature, not *in itself*, but as defined in human terms, is cultural. Nature's very conception as nature reflects a set of human values. The difficulty here is that nature resists definition: pure nature, that is, nature *in itself*, is *noumenal*, we will never know it other than through our experience of it. *Physis itself* eludes us. We might argue that humankind is part of nature – this does not resolve the problematic, it merely shifts its locality from the duality nature/culture in the world, to the human as duality itself: both natural and cultural. However, Jacques Derrida argues, as we shall see later, that the binary categories nature and culture are produced rather than inherent in being. They are the products of the differential and deferred play of *différance*. The natural and the cultural are eternal differences of the same: *physis in différance*.

In order to develop the conception of landscape as place in difference, I would now like to briefly turn my attention to Michel Foucault's notion of the *heterotopia*. This will enable us to look at landscape in terms of the *heterotopia*, or place of otherness, especially with respect to the National Park. In particular, I intend to look at the landscape photographs of Yosemite taken by Ansel Adams and Stephen Shore. These images elucidate Foucault's point that the *heterotopia* contests the very utopian ideal that it purports to represent.

According to Foucault, the *heterotopia* is a space of otherness and difference. For Foucault, the world is a set of structural/spatial relations, and those relations which are of significance to Foucault relate in a particular way to *time*. These "emplacements"[30] as he calls them, fall into two categories: the utopia and the *heterotopia*. The utopia is an ideal

[30] Michel Foucault 'Different Spaces' *Aesthetics Method and Epistemology* James Faubion (ed), Robert Hurley (trans), London: Penguin, 2000 p. 178

space: literally a non-place, perfected, out with time. It is either "society perfected or the reverse of society…these…spaces…are fundamentally and essentially unreal."[31] On the other hand, there are localities, places in society, built into its very institutions which seek to fulfil utopian ideals. Foucault calls these "actually realized utopias"[32] *heterotopias*. These are physical spaces which

> all the other real emplacements that can be found within a culture are, at the same time, represented, contested, and reversed, sorts of places that are outside all places, although they are actually localizable. Because they are utterly different from all the emplacements that they reflect or refer to, I shall call these places "heterotopias," as opposed to utopias[33]

Heterotopias are therefore other places, they are places of otherness and difference. The localisable place of the *heterotopia* overturns and undermines all other actual cultural emplacements. The *heterotopia* reverses the very relations that (through a given culture) it attempts to represent.

There are two types of Foucauldian *heterotopia*, the first is characterised by a significant relationship with time, i.e. those institutions which accumulate time (museums), and those institutions which have a transitory/fleeting relation to time, (the fair or the carnival and the festival opening onto *heterochronias*). The *heterotopia* also juxtaposes disparate and incompatible elements. He gives several examples, such as the cinema and the theatre but, according to Foucault, the oldest and

[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.

arguably most prevalent form of the contradictory *heterotopia* is the garden.

> The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and the whole world at the same time. Since early antiquity the garden has been a sort of blissful and universalizing heterotopia (hence our zoological gardens).[34]

The garden is a representation of nature. The garden is also an important point of departure in terms of American and European thought regarding the perfection of nature. In European thought nature reaches its perfection in the garden, a kind of Edenic return. For the American, on the other hand, nature perfected is the pre-Edenic wilderness. Thus a particular way of thinking about the National Park as pristine wilderness holds sway over American landscape identity. However, we might argue that something that all National Parks have in common is their status as contradictory heterotopias.

The elusiveness of *physis* entails that 'Pure Nature' is the site of a range of cultural disagreements, but as the sociologist Bruno Latour argues, contentions about nature are also politically derived. Nature is an extremely complex term which is culturally and politically motivated. It is a multivalent term which is constituted by the user's viewpoint, a point which we will return to during the following chapter. Being close to nature, in a Latourean sense, is to be at the heart of conflict and contention regarding nature. The multiple definitions of nature therefore carry ideological (often religious) latencies. However, as I shall go on to demonstrate, the notion of the landscape as wilderness is a kind of

[34] Ibid. p.182

utopian vision of Nature which contests that which it purports to represent. This conception of nature (i.e. an ideal place outside of culture) is, in the Latourean (political) sense, a *bad* representation. It could also be argued

Merced River, Yosemite National Park, California, August 13, 1979 Stephen Shore, 1979

that the wilderness landscape is culturally inscribed as a *heterotopia*: a contested utopia. That is to say, as Foucault presents it, the *heterotopia* brings together the disparate or the incompatible in one place. In a sense, the ideal of the National Park epitomises the contradictory *heterotopia* as it is at once an emblem of Pure Nature, whilst fulfilling the cultural needs of its visitors. We need only refer to the dramatically divergent images of Yosemite photographed by Ansel Adams and Stephen Shore to make this point. Neither image gives us a definitive view of Yosemite, although it might be fair to say that the dominant

iconography of Yosemite National Park is presented by the ubiquitous work of Ansel Adams.

Clearing Winter Storm, Yosemite National Park, Ansel Adams, 1944

These contested representations of Yosemite, a place of difference, give rise to a reading of the landscape *heterotopia* as "heterotopology." Foucault writes:

> As for heterotopias…how might they be described? …One could imagine…a sort of systematic description that would have the object, in a given society, of studying, analyzing, describing, "reading," as people are fond of saying now, these different spaces, these other

> places, a kind of contestation, both mythical and real, of the space in which we live. This description could be called "heterotopology".[35]

A National Park, such as Yosemite in the United States, is a place of otherness, a re-sacralized space[36], considered by its visitors as quintessentially natural. And yet, the Yosemite Valley has a history of environmental management which exemplifies a particular ethnocentric ideology of place.

> The ideology embodied in "imperial landscape" was used to help justify the clearing of the Yosemite Valley of the Yosemite "Indians" because it was claimed that they not only did not appreciate its scenery but also damaged it through their practice of burning the "natural" meadowlands…
>
> Images of this scene, emptied of its native inhabitants, have become "canonised"…as when seen through the lenses of an Ansel Adams or an Eadweard Muybridge.[37]

Adams' photographs of Yosemite, stripped of its human presence through habitation purport to be sublime vistas, pure presentations of wilderness America: the perfection of nature. As Kenneth Olwig points out, they have become canonical, authoritative, accepted visions of the rhetoric

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[35] Ibid p.179

[36] The notion of the National Park relies on the opposition between nature and culture, leisure and work, conserved and unconserved. Foucault writes: "perhaps our life is still dominated by a certain number of oppositions that cannot be tampered with, that institutions and practices have not ventured to change – oppositions we take for granted, for example, between private space and public space, between the family space and social space, between cultural space and useful space, between the space of leisure activities and the space of work. All of these are still controlled by an unspoken sacralisation." Ibid. p.177

[37] Kenneth R. Olwig *Landscape Theory* James Elkins and Rachel Ziady DeLue (eds) New York; Abingdon, Oxon: 2008 pp.174-175

of nature as wilderness. Adams' images of nature are also photography perfected, tonally superior to the light on the land itself. Dodging and burning (the tonal manipulations used by the photographic printer in the darkroom), observed Adams, are a matter of rectifying the mistakes made by God in the tonal relationships in the world! The manner in which the photographer visualises the landscape, which is after all a contrivance, should draw to our attention to the culturally determined mythic values associated with this allegedly pristine wilderness. However our tendency is to treat photographs as natural and somehow transparent, but as we shall see in due course, according to Barthes' early writing on photography, photographs are *pseudo* natural.

The ethnocentric ideology of the landscape transforms the body of the land into a contested territory, in which certain myths operate, a dominant heterotopology:

> how "actual" is a landscape that must be secretively maintained by the U.S. Park Service to maintain seemingly natural meadows that are actually the cultural landscape created by the burning practices of the Yosemite people.[38]

We might argue that the myth of nature is promulgated by the Foucauldian "unspoken sacralisation"[39] of the National Park which in turn invites association of this ideology with a distinctive sense of nationhood. The cultural landscape *as* natural landscape is in a sense *heterotopian*: it contests the utopian ideology of nature, negating the sense of landscape as a cultural entity by the assertion of its naturalness. In these

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[38] Ibid.p.175
[39] Michel Foucault 'Different Spaces' *Aesthetics Method and Epistemology* James Faubion (ed), Robert Hurley (trans), London: Penguin, 2000 p.177

circumstances, nature is a myth: "Nature has", as Denis Cosgrove points out, "a history."[40]

The photographs of Ansel Adams function like a high definition myopia. They present a vision of the American wilderness which is heterotopian insofar as it contests what it represents: nature as an ideal place outside of culture. In this sense, these images are examples of Latourean *bad* representations. We might go far as to say that Adams' work from Yosemite is an exemplar of Barthesean *mythologie*: the pristine wilderness is a cultural myth.

For Roland Barthes, myth supervenes on an already existing semiological chain. However, where the sign is unmotivated, or arbitrary, mythical signification is motivated. Myth, argues Barthes, is motivated by ideology, bourgeois ideology to be precise. Unlike first order meaning, there *appears* to be a natural connection between the signifier (first order sign) and its concept (signified). The function of mythology (cultural myths) is the perpetuation of bourgeois ideology and the practice of pseudo-natural signification is, according to Barthes, instrumental in this regard. Unlike Ferdinand de Saussure, for Barthes, semiotics has a profoundly social dimension. Semiotics enables cultural myths to be constructed but also, crucially for Barthes, deconstructed. Semiotics is a tool which can be used to undermine dominant ideologies which are perpetuated by cultural myths in a range of public media.

Myth, argues Barthes, "is a type of speech."[41] This conception of myth sits comfortably with its etymology insofar as myth is a "fictitious narrative", an

[40] Denis Cosgrove 'The Art Seminar' *Landscape Theory* James Elkins and Rachel Ziady DeLue (eds) New York; Abingdon, Oxon: 2008 p.90

oral tradition which accounts for cultural belief through recourse to the supernatural. For Barthes, writing in *Mythologies*, both verbal and visual forms of communication are speech:

> We shall therefore take language, discourse, speech, etc., to mean any significant unit or synthesis, whether verbal or visual: a photograph will be a kind of speech for us in the same way as a newspaper article; even objects become speech if they mean something.[42]

The type of speech articulated by the visual (i.e. the photograph) is a pseudo-natural signification, this is to say, it is presented as if it were natural. The natural speech of the photograph is a construction. In order to deconstruct the dominant mythologies of culture, Barthes argues that a particular kind of reader is called for. To read and decipher myths we should, argues Barthes, return to the "duplicity of [myth's] signifier"[43] The signifier, both full and devoid of meaning can be considered in three different ways which, states Barthes, 'produces' three kinds of reader:

i) The signifier can be analysed in terms of its emptiness, the concept fills the signifier (form) and the signification is literal: it exemplifies or symbolises something. This reader is a producer of myths, complicit in the system of myth production: cynical.

ii) The signifier may be analysed as being full: both the meaning and the form are distinguishable from one another and thus the manipulation/distortion is demonstrated. This reader is a demystifier: a mythologist.

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[41] Roland Barthes 'Myth Today' in *Mythologies* Annette Lavers (trans and selected) London: Vintage, 2000 p.109
[42] Ibid. pp.110-111
[43] Ibid. p.128

iii) The signifier is analysed (focussed) as a whole, constituted by both meaning and form i.e. both aspects of its duplicitous identity. This generates 'ambiguous signification' which produces the 'reader of myths'

> I respond to the constituting mechanism of myth, to its own dynamics, I become a reader of myths… the reader lives the myth as a story at once true and unreal.[44]

This, according to Barthes, is a 'dynamic' reading in which the reader both participates in and disbelieves the myth. For, in order to undermine the cultural myths of the dominant ideology, the reader must be able to participate in and comprehend the myth in order to deconstruct it. The myths of dominant ideologies are powerful due to the fact that they *appear* to be natural. Second order meaning has a logical, pseudo natural connection between signifier and signified (Barthes' example is the now famous discussion of the cover of Paris Match showing the young black soldier saluting the French flag). Myth signification (the coupling of the form and concept) is naturalised:

> Everything happens as if the picture naturally conjured up the concept, as if the signifier gave a foundation to the signified: the myth exists from the precise moment when French imperiality achieves the natural state: myth is speech justified in excess.[45]

[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid. pp.129-130

I would now like to explore precisely what bearing Barthes' ideas about myth expressed in 'Myth Today' will have on our previous discussions regarding landscape.

We already looked at the photographs of Ansel Adams in the context of the National Park. Taking a very different image of Yosemite photographed by Stephen Shore into consideration, we begin to see the artifice of Adam's image. Now, the very notion that the photograph is artifice or artful is, to a certain extent, acceptable to Adams and his publishers:

> The creations of man or nature never have more grandeur than in an Ansel Adams photograph, and his image can seize the viewer with more force than the natural object from which it was made.[46]

For Adams, the artifice of the photographic is not in itself problematic, indeed I concur with this up to a point. However, I believe that what Barthes teaches us about myth and the myth-speech of photography in particular, is that we should be ready as readers of myth to decode and deconstruct the image before us: to read Adams' images of Yosemite, admittedly as photographic constructions, but nonetheless representations of Nature in its pure and awe inspiring form. Adams' photographs may be made, but the image of the landscape that he advocates is supposedly unaltered by man: the myth of nature is promulgated photographically in his images of Yosemite.

Through his writing in 'Myth Today' Barthes wants us to challenge our assumptions about what is natural in writing and image but, as we will see

[46] From an advertisement for a book of Adam's photographs cited by Susan Sontag in *On Photography* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002 p.188

in the next chapter, by the time Barthes is writing in *Camera Lucida*, two decades later, his position on photography has dramatically changed. Barthes' final work is a meditation on love, mourning, loss and photography, the implications of which will be examined during the next chapter. In the meantime, let us look at Barthes' writings on text and investigate where this takes us in terms of our investigations into landscape. Firstly, as is consistent with the discussion of myth, the notion that landscapes can be read will be explored in conjunction with ideas put forward by the cultural geographers Trevor J. Barnes and James S. Duncan. The definition of text in terms of lingustics will be investigated through a brief exegesis of the writings of Ferdinand de Saussure, then we will move on to look at Roland Barthes, whose writings on semiotics, text and photography are key points of contact throughout this thesis. Both approaches will have a critical bearing upon how we begin to reconsider landscape as a non-essentialist concept, a non-place without boundaries.

IV Landscape as Text

We have seen that landscapes are cultural products and thinking the term expansively supports the idea that landscapes are inscriptions of culture. Loosely, we might say that the inscribed body of the landscape is a kind of text. Indeed cultural geographers, literary theorists and anthropologists have often used the word 'text' to describe cultural products including landscapes, but can the landscape really 'mean' as a text does, or does this conception rely on a rethink of the word *text* itself? Is the landscape a cultural product which can be read, that is, does it support signification? This is not to ask can I read the landscape for a singular meaning, but does text account for landscapes which promote

open readings that are culturally informed? Barnes and Duncan, in the Introduction to *Writing Worlds* argue that:

> Cultural productions such as paintings, maps and landscapes…should all be seen as signifying practices that are read, not passively, but, as it were, rewritten as they are read. This expanded notion of texts originates from a broadly post-modern view, one that sees them as constructive of reality rather than mimicking it – in other words, as cultural practices of signification rather than as referential duplications.[47]

So, on the face of it, Barnes and Duncan posit that landscapes *are* texts and therefore they should be treated as artefacts which are capable of supporting a fluid practice of signification, understood in the post-structuralist and post-modern sense of being rewritten as they are engaged with. Rather than texts being representations or 'referential duplications' of that which they stand for, the text 'constructs' reality: the text is a process which activates meaning through the cultural practice of signification, rather than embodying a fixed semantic content which is 'uncovered' by reading, or by transparent reference to a world external to itself. In a sense, writing, as both practice and product, is a space of engagement. Texts are therefore not decoded to reveal their alleged deep meaning (structure), rather they are the spaces of meaning production: play. The text is not simply a collection of words that contain meaning like vessels, text is a process through which meaning is activated. Text is opaque: it is part of the world and the world is part of text.

[47] Barnes, Trevor J. and James Duncan 'Introduction' *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape* New York; London: Routledge, 1992 p.5

Barnes and Duncan take their cue from the later, post-structuralist, literary writings of Roland Barthes in which he theorises the text and the death of the author, in an attempt to decentre literary works, authors and critics. As we will see later, in Barthes' differentiation between 'work' and 'Text', the material body of the literary work (i.e. ink on paper bound together) is to be differentiated from the Text which transects many works, inscribing meaning relationally. Therefore it is necessary to explore the notion of the text more deeply if we are to progress beyond a superficial understanding of landscape as text i.e. simply as a surface physically marked with the traces of human activity.

In etymological terms a text, "wording of anything written," from the Latin *textus* literally means a thing woven. The word has metaphorical origins: like fabric, a text is constructed, tied together and Text has connections to art through *techne*, to make. A text is made by the practice of writing, the texture of the text is to be read with the eye. Text is:

> [a]n ancient metaphor: thought is a thread, and the raconteur is a spinner of yarns – but the true storyteller, the poet is a weaver. The scribes made this old and audible abstraction into a new and visible fact. After long practice, their work took on such an even, flexible texture that they called the written page *textus*, which means cloth.[48]

In order to fully grasp what Barthes means by the word Text, it would be prudent to look briefly at some of the ideas of Ferdinand de Saussure whose semiology informs Barthes' thought, in particular his earlier structuralist writings. For Saussure, language means through a process of

[48] Robert Bringhurst 'Elements of Topographic Style' cited in the Online Etymology Dictionary http://www.etymonline/index.php?search=text&searchmode=none accessed 25.02.2008

signification based upon difference or differentiation. Meaning is constructed using a system of signs which operate in relation to one another. The meaning of any given sign only makes sense in relation to other signs within the system. Thus signs come to be significant in relation to that which they are *not*.

For Saussure the key binary opposition in semiology is between speaking (*parole*) and language (*langue*). Speaking is an individual act whereas language is the system, defined and regulated by its collective use, which makes it resistant to continual change.

> Execution is always individual, and the individual is always its master: I shall call the executive side *speaking* [*parole*].[49]

> language is not complete in any speaker; it exists perfectly only within a collectivity.[50]

A critical component in the semiological system is the tri-partite sign: the (empty) signifier and the signified (concept) are united in the (meaningful) sign. The signifier is not simply an expression of the signified: meaning is constituted by the conjoining of the signifier and the signified as sign. As we will see later, Saussure's choice of terminology has relevance (or indeed is revelatory) for Jacques Derrida, however, for the time being let us simply restate his words:

> I call the combination of a concept and a sound-image a *sign*, but in current usage the term generally designates only a sound-image, a

[49] Ferdinand de Saussure 'The Linguistic Sign' from Course in General Lingustics reprinted in *Semiotics: an introductory reader* Robert E. Innis (ed) London: Hutchison & Co., 1986 p.32
[50] Ibid. p.33

> word, for example (*arbor*, etc.). One tends to forget that *arbor* is called a sign only because it carries the concept "tree," with the result that the idea of the sensory part implies the idea of the whole.
>
> Ambiguity would disappear if the three notions involved here were designated by three names, each suggesting and opposing the others. I propose to retain the word *sign* [*signe*] to designate the whole and to replace concept and sound-image respectively by *signified* [*signifié*] and *signifier* [*significant*]…as regards *sign*, if I am satisfied with it, this is simply because I do not know of any word to replace it, the ordinary language suggesting no other.[51]

The sign is central to Sausurre's project of linguistic differentiation, its constitutive components are inseparable like the *recto verso* of a sheet of paper. In his *Course in General Lingustics*, Saussure states that the first principle of semiology is that the relation between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. The arbitrary nature of the relation between the two parts of the sign denies any natural link between the thing and its name. Saussure argues that this accounts for the profound differences between languages when it comes to certain words: some words have no equivalent in other languages, thus the relation must be arbitrary, rather than naturally determined. Controversially, Saussure 'brackets' the referent in his system of semiology. That is to say, the sign is cut from the referent in virtue of its arbitrary and psychological nature. Linguistic signs therefore function in a separate system to what might be described as reality, or the 'extra-semiotic'. The world, constructed by language is intra-semiotic'. However, for Saussure the linguistic sign is immaterial: it is composed of a sound pattern (Saussure calls it a 'sound-image') and a

[51] Ibid. p.37

concept. The sign, liberated from the ties of its phonic substance and materiality, is not simply the coupling of a name and a thing:

> The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image. The latter is not the material sound, a purely physical thing, but the psychological imprint of the sound, the impression that it makes on our senses. The sound-image is sensory, and if I happen to call it "material," it is only in that sense, and by way of opposing it to the other term of the association, the concept, which is generally more abstract.[52]

Thus the linguistic sign is constituted by the psychological impression of the sound image, or pattern, in the hearer and the concept brought to mind: Saussure's sign is fundamentally psychological:

> Both terms involved in the linguistic sign are psychological and are united in the brain by associative bond.[53]

This phonic privilege in Saussure's account has been criticised by Jacques Derrida as it marginalises writing and casts it as a perverse exteriority, a theme to which we will turn later in the thesis. It is therefore significant to note that Saussure clearly situated the linguistic sign out with the materiality of written or spoken language – the word is dematerialised.

> Because we regard the words of our language as sound-images, we must avoid speaking of the "phonemes" that make up the words. This term, which suggests vocal activity, is applicable to the spoken word only, to the realization of the inner image in discourse. We can avoid this misunderstanding by speaking of the *sounds* and *syllables* of a

[52] Ibid. p.36
[53] Ibid.

> word provided we remember that the names refer to the sound-image.[54]

The artifice of the sign is instituted by Saussure's first principle of semiology, which states that the sign is "unmotivated".[55] Thus semiology does not translate our experience of the world. In fact, semiology constructs our (meaningful) experience of the world by differencing homogenous sensory experience into a differentiated field of signs. We make sense of the world using language (through speech) which is structured relationally and coded through convention: we see and speak the world through a screen, the relational tissue of language.

> Saussure put at the heart of his work the …thesis …that experience is an undifferentiated and amorphous continuum until it is "cut" by the diacritical act of speech and codified in the system of differences which make up language[56]

The act of speaking marks and differentiates the topology of experience, the distinctions and differences are then "codified" in language: semiology differentiates experience.

Saussurean semiology is concerned solely with language. Indeed, Saussure argued that semiology, in its mature form, would encompass linguistics. Roland Barthes, whose early structuralist writings were profoundly influenced by Saussure, sought to widen the scope of semiology to include a range of signifying practices (cinema, advertising,

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[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid. p.38
[56] Robert E. Innis *Semiotics: an introductory reader* London: Hutchison & Co., 1986 p.26

press photography, fashion etc) and proposed an inversion of the relationship between semiology and linguistics:

> We must now face the possibility of inverting Saussure's declaration: linguistics is not a part of the general science of signs, even a privileged part, it is semiology which is a part of linguistics: to be precise, it is that part covering the *great signifying unities* of discourse.[57]

Rather than semiology constituting a structural science of signs, an overarching system for the analysis of language, Barthes suggests that semiology is a component of linguistics, which enables the signifying practices of range of discourses to be analysed. This would enable, argues Barthes, a general science of signs to illuminate consistent overlaps in research between disciplines like anthropology, sociology, psycho-analysis and stylistics. A general science of signs could therefore be used in fields other than language, and indeed this opens up the possibility of semiology as a critical component in interdisciplinary research. Barthes' inversion redefines semiotics as a practice which facilitates the analysis of a range of disciplines and thus it is the domain of interdisciplinarity: the in-between of academic discourses.

Later in his career, Barthes wrote in a more post-structuralist vein and in 'From Work to Text,' first written in 1971 and later expanded and developed into 'Theory of the Text', he challenges this notion of the theorist/author operating from a position outside of language. In this piece of writing, Barthes calls for a new object of interdisciplinary research which is "the Text." The Text is a literary object which challenges the

[57] Roland Barthes *Elements of Semiology* Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (trans), New York: Hill and Wang, 1968 p.11

classical model of the writer who is able to construct the novel or other form of writing, from a position outside of the work. In order to elucidate the radically contingent nature of the Text, Barthes uses the differing conceptions of Newtonian and Einsteinian science to guide us. He writes:

> Just as Einsteinian science demands that *the relativity of the frames of reference* be included in the object studied, so the combined action of Marxism, Freudianism and structuralism demands, in literature, the relativization of the relations of writer, reader and observer (critic). Over against the traditional notion of the *work*, for long – and still – conceived of in a, so to speak, Newtonian way, there is now the requirement of a new object, obtained by the sliding or overturning of former categories. That object is the Text.[58]

The Text is a new object which is not to be defined by fixed subject object relations. The work, tended to be thought in terms of the subject (author, reader, critic), who is played out as Newtonian scientist by Barthes, writes or observes the work in a detached manner with a clear, externalising relationship with the object of study. However, according to the model of Einsteinian science, the observer necessarily becomes part of the observation. Just as the laboratory does not engender neutrality in an experiment, Barthes argues that the Text should annihilate the 'false' distance between subject and object. The subject and object are conflated, the neutrality of language is called into question, and the authority of the writer is undermined.

The dissolution of subject/object relations is a thematic which has considerable relevance to this thesis insofar as we will move towards the

[58] Roland Barthes 'From Work to Text' in *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds), Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1998 p.941

position that the practitioner is embroiled within the work[59]. Indeed, the imbrication of the practitioner in the photographic process is an idea that we will explore in greater detail during the subsequent chapter. In addition, rethinking the landscape in terms of the relational structure of text, entails that landscape is not an object but rather a nexus of relations in which landscape, in non-essentialist terms, is a construct of constantly changing relations. The notion of the text as a nexus of shifting relations is also of critical import to our later discussions on the nature of photographic practice.

Although Barthes argues that the Text is a new object, we should be careful not to think of this in the purely material sense. Barthes differentiates between the literary work as a material object, and the Text, which may or may not be a singular piece of literature, but which cuts across many works through a network of references. The work is a "fragment of substance,"[60] it has a material presence, in the form of a book, which can be held or has its place in the library, whereas the Text is what Barthes describes as a "methodological field"[61]. Whilst the material presence of the work enables it to be held in the hand, according to Barthes the Text can only be held in language. As we shall see in due course, this has critical import for visual practice insofar as we might argue that the viewer is held within the text of practice. Therefore it will be significant that we explore the notion of the visual and writing later in the thesis.

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[59] Barthes writes that the author (the example he gives if of a novelist) is by no means entirely banished from the Text but is able to return to is as a "guest". He goes on to write: "he is inscribed in the novel like one of his characters, figured in the carpet" Ibid. p.944

[60] Ibid. p.942

[61] Ibid.

So, for Barthes, the relative relationship between the Sign and the work and the Sign and the Text are at variance from one another. The work, in Barthes words, functions as a "general sign,"[62] either via the signification of the signified revealed through philology, or the interpretation of secretive signification through hermeneutics. The Text, on the other hand, does not close on the signified, rather Barthes describes it as "dilatory",[63] that is to say, it delays the closure of meaning. The Text does not allow meaning to settle, i.e. it frustrates the denotative function of the sign, disrupting the relationship between the signifier and the signified. The Text disseminates the signifier in a chain of deferred meaning. The signifier is not a vehicle for meaning, rather meaning in the Text is infinitely deferred enabling the field of the Text to function as an "irreducible"[64] plurality. Barthes writes:

> The Text…practices the infinite deferment of the signified, [it] is dilatory; its field is that of the signifier and the signifier must not be conceived of as 'the first stage of meaning,' its material vestibule, but, in complete opposition to this, as its deferred action. [65]

The meaningful field of the Text is not the Sign but the signifier and as such 'deferred action' of which Barthes writes is the closure of meaning. The perpetual openness of text enables a plurality of possible meanings. Thus the Text is constantly mobile, held in the moving discourse of language. Barthes writes that the "logic regulating the Text is not comprehensive…but metonymic."[66] Which is to say, the Text is never complete, all-encompassing, definitive, total. The logic which regulates the Text is its tolerance for metonymic substitution, that is to say, the

[62] Ibid. p.943
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.

expansiveness of the Text derives from its capacity to support, as Barthes goes on to write, "contiguities, associations and carrying overs."[67] Thus the text is not a special kind of work or type of literature, Barthes characterises it as a movement which does not stop. "[T]he Text is experienced only in an activity of production."[68] The Text is too restless to be defined by a space taken up on a library shelf. It oscillates in the space between discourses: it is the very space of interdisciplinarity.

Let us now turn back to the question of landscape and look at it specifically in relation to what has been discovered in our explorations of text found in the writings of Roland Barthes. The landscape as a text, knotted and woven together – the *–ship* of *landship* denoting a collection, tied together as in "sheaf" implies that spaces coalesce to form collections which cluster around given social activities. Therefore, areas of overlap and the differentiation between synthetic spaces become increasingly significant. Thus the text of the landscape does not embody a singularity of meaning but represents both change over time motivated by changing use(s), and the contingency of the viewer/viewpoint. The meaning of text of the landscape is plural. To return to Roland Barthes, the Text is an "*irreducible* (and not merely acceptable) plural"[69].

Barthes describes the Text's weave of signifiers as a "stereographic plurality"[70]. However, the pluralism of the text is not simply ambiguity; pluralism is inscribed into the very fabric of the Text. Barthes draws a comparison between the reader of the Text and a "passably empty

[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid. p.941
[69] Ibid. p.943
[70] Ibid.

subject"[71], i.e. himself, walking along a valley. The walker hears sounds emanating from dispersed sources: children shouting; the faint calls of birds; he sees light and colours from the vegetation; the clothing of others. He experiences a multiplicity of sense impressions of which he writes:

> All of these *incidents* are half-identifiable; they come from codes which are known but their combination is unique, founds the stroll in a difference repeatable only as difference.[72]

Thus Barthes uses the landscape as a metaphor or model of the Text. The walker inhabits the Text of the landscape, the varying sense impressions emanating from all directions are an illustration of the manner in which the Text cuts across a number of works. But the intertextuality of the Text is its movement, the stereographic plurality of the landscape as Text implies a multiplicity of viewpoints, the weave of signifiers fabricate a surface accessible from many positions. The landscape as text overthrows the notion of a fixed relation between reader (viewer) and text. The reading of the landscape as Text is founded in *a difference repeatable only as difference*.

In addition, according to Barthes, the Text can only be itself in difference. The reading of the text is "semelfactive"[73], that is to say, instantaneous, momentary. If we think the landscape in terms of this punctual or non-durational reading, we begin to read it as a changing field subject to constant deferral, there is no definitive reading. The pluralism of the landscape as Text entails that each viewer, or reader passes in and

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[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid. pp.943-944
[73] Ibid. p.944

through it from a multiplicity of perspectives under constantly varying conditions, and each time re-reads the Text anew.

The paradigm shift from structuralism to post-structuralism in Barthes' thought is reflected in his changing ideas regarding the relationship between language and its discourse. Barthes concludes in 'From Work to Text' that a theory of the Text should, at the very least, throw the very concept of *metalanguage* into doubt, and the discourse on the Text "should itself be nothing other than text, research, textual activity"[74], that is, the theory of the Text should not propose an alternative, external vantage point from which to comprehend, or decode the Text. Rather, the discourse on the Text should be, as Barthes puts it, "nothing other than text"[75] itself. For, he goes on to write, "the Text is that *social* space which leaves no language safe, outside, nor any subject of the enunciation in position as judge, master, analyst, confessor, decoder."[76] This has a bearing on this thesis insofar as it questions a range of assumptions regarding the position of the reader: viewer of landscape, photographer/camera, and also reader within an exhibition. It is therefore a point to which we will inevitably return.

Just as we are inside the social space of the Text i.e. shared and therefore changing, the notion of the landscape as Barthesian Text reprises the idea of the landscape as social, changing and in some sense an immersive space. Shifting our thoughts about landscape from 'landscape as picture', with an implied (ideal) viewer, to landscape as text, re-*places* the viewer/subject within the shared space of the landscape. The space of landscape is shifted from a special geographical location to the *locus*

[74] Ibid. p.946
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.

of a discursive practice. The viewer is no longer merely a reader but a writer of the landscape, and as Barthes concludes, "[t]he theory of the text can coincide only with a practice of writing."[77] As we have already seen, Barthes writes that the Text is 'dilatory' in nature, the signified is subject to infinite deferral. The Text is a "methodological field," a field of signifiers which is constantly mobile. The Text never rests or allows its meaning to be closed off: the Text remains mobile, each signifier refers to another; a signifier of the signifier.

As we have already seen, thinking about the landscape as a picture is just one way to consider landscape. Through an investigation of the etymology of the word we have opened other possibilities for understanding the term, beyond that of the modern etymology. As it transpires, there are ideologies and assumptions latent in the word which this overview sought to reveal. From landscape as picture we have passed to an understanding of landscape which takes into consideration the older etymology of land shaped by people. This, in conjunction with John Brinkerhoff Jackson's argument that *skip/scape* refers to a collective, presents us with the possibility of interpreting and engaging with landscape as a collection of traces of human activity. Landscape is a social space which is shaped over time by progressive habitation, farming etc. This particular notion of landscape, inscribed by human activity opens up the possibility of thinking about the landscape in terms of text, which is a significant point which we shall pursue.

[77] Ibid.

V Concluding remarks

What is to be gained by recasting the landscape in these terms? As we have already noted from our investigations of Roland Barthes, underpinned by a reading of Saussure, the notion of text is suggestive of a shared space, a space where meaning is generated rather than passively received and understood. This idea of text as a generative space also begins to question any notion of knowledge as fixed, comprehensive and total. If texts are fluid, rewritten by the reader as they are read, a knowledge of text is necessarily unstable, contingent: built, lost and rebuilt. Knowledge in this regard is as shared and mutable as the space which engenders it, in a constant state of flux.

Whilst Roland Barthes would leave the door open for a stable reading or interpretation through his differentiation between work and text, Jacques Derrida, as we shall see in due course, would not. We will investigate this in a later chapter but firstly it would be prudent to review the implications of landscape as text and where this takes the general argument of the thesis.

Redefining the landscape as text facilitates a renewed engagement between the land and the camera. I find that it presents the possibility of thinking the relationship between landscape and photographic practice as intertextual: practice between the text of landscape and the text of the photograph. Photograph as text implies that the camera is a machine for writing as opposed to picturing: an inscriptive practice. It will be towards this question that we turn our attention in chapters three and four which will deal with the notion of photography as writing and the relationship between landtext and photowriting as intertextual. The

progress made in understanding Saussure and Barthes will be further developed through an enquiry into Derrida's notion of *écriture*: photography in the expanded field of writing.

During the course of this chapter we have also investigated the extent to which we rely upon uncritical or unconsidered understanding of nature as a framework for the comprehension of landscape. The modern dictionary definition of landscape as a picture of natural inland scenery has been found to be problematic in its reliance upon both landscape as view and the natural. Even in the (contested) modern etymological conception of landscape, the idea that Dutch landscapes were totally natural is clearly open to dispute. To the Dutch landscape painter the land's shape was of interest whether natural or artificial.

Through a brief investigation of Foucault's *heterotopia* we considered the idea that Nature, as expressed in the ideology of the National Park is a contradiction. Utopian ideals about the preservation of nature, such as in the National Park, can lead to contradictory practices which bring to light the concept of these places as contested spaces. We looked at two quite different images from Yosemite by Ansel Adams and Stephen Shore.

Bearing in mind what Barthes writes about the need to decipher myth, in terms of reading the text of landscape, Adams could be described as the reader of myths who is complicit in the ideology, in this case the myth of Nature. On the other hand, I would consider Shore a 'mythologist' in Barthesean terms, a reader of myths:

> This type of focussing is that of the mythologist: he deciphers the myth, he understands the distortion.[78]

Jackson, Wyoming, September 2, 1979, Stephen Shore, 1979

Questioning the clearly defined view of nature leads me to ask questions of photography which is often treated as a form of natural representation.

[78] Roland Barthes 'Myth Today' in *Mythologies* Annette Lavers (trans and selected) London: Vintage, 2000 p.128

Just as landscape has metaphor and ideology secreted in the word, the latencies and assumptions of a photographic representation considered to be natural are open to question.

With this in mind, I intend to investigate and question the notion of the photograph as a natural representation, or as Barthes would have it, a natural presentation. I will therefore question the photograph's being-as-presence, looking to the ideas of Bruno Latour regarding nature and Vilèm Flusser on photography to assist me in coming to a more instrumental, and thus opaque, characterisation of photography. The role that Roland Barthes plays in this thesis is of interest insofar as I find his writing on text and authorship informative and constructive. However, despite the beauty and moving writing to be found in *Camera Lucida*, it is my contention that this work does not help but indeed hinders the progress of a theory of photography as writing.

The world, experienced through a field of language, an intertextual and mobile reading of landscape, sustains the idea of the landscape as text. The cultural interventions which inform the contemporary landscape can be thought of as writing or inscriptive practices. Activities such as ploughing, building, walking, make (i.e. shape) the landscape. So cultural practices are written into the world, indeed we might go so far as to say that cultural practices are the world humanly understood.

So for Barthes text is the endless movement of language. We always find ourselves situated within discourse, there is no preface, no origin, no beginning. The open structural framework of language, built on the principle that the sign is open, that the signifier signifies yet another signifier, slides and evades a permanency of meaning. Landscape, as is

language, is rewritten and rewrites itself through the process of its own creation. The spatio-temporal nature of the landscape is overlaid making a palimpsest of meaning that is continually deferred through overwrite, overlay and erasure. There, in the landscape, the signified always already functions as a signifier. The anti-essentialist conception of landscape which emerges here would understand there to be no originary wild landscape but surfaces of ever changing inscription.

Chapter 2

Photography: incarnation or imbroglio?

I Ways of Seeing Photography

II The Persistence of the Referent

III Natural Icons

IV The Photograph as Technical Image

V The Culture of Nature

VI Natural Icons in Dispute

VII Concluding remarks

I Ways of Seeing Photography

Following on from the question posed in chapter one regarding landscape as text, I now intend to focus my attention on three key areas relating to this. Firstly, I will return to the work of Roland Barthes but this time I will look more closely at his photographic writings, in particular his final, elegiac work *Camera Lucida*. My aim is to demonstrate that Barthes' understanding of photography is strongly premised on a desire for presence. The book is akin to a quasi-theological discourse in which photography is given the role of transparent mediator between two worlds: the world of the living and the world of the dead. Barthes compares the photograph to a divine imprint, a shadow on Christ's sweatcloth, which has the power to resurrect the body in an eternal now. Compelling as this is, there are serious problems with this way of thinking about photographs. On the one hand, the photograph's means of production, its apparatus, is denied, which I believe has serious import for photographic practice. On the other hand, the desire for presence to be found in Barthes' *Camera Lucida* is emblematic of a broader concern in philosophy, which Jacques Derrida called the metaphysics of presence. It is towards this question and its attendant implications for photographic practice that I will turn in chapter three.

My second area of enquiry in this chapter will be the writing of Vilém Flusser and Bruno Latour, unlikely bedfellows perhaps, but reviewing both writers together enables a counter argument to Barthes' ideas to be formulated. Although this chapter is concerned with photography, discussions of my own practice will be deferred until later in the thesis. This is largely due to the fact that I intend to establish my position on photography before I go on to discuss my own work. The deliberations in

the pages that follow are critical in terms of my emerging practice and my own understanding of the broad concerns of the photographic enterprise.

The conception of the landscape as text, which was explored in the preceding chapter, has opened up a way of thinking about landscape as a movement which does not stop. However, the landscape as text, a surface inscribed by changing cultural uses, may be momentarily arrested by photography: the photographed moment endures. The action of fixing an image of the world seen photographically through the surrogate eye of the camera seems to insist upon the relation of seer and seen, subject and object. Whether we rewrite the landscape as a text or not, to think of the camera as a pseudo subject, a mechanical Cyclops, necessarily posits that what the camera 'looks at', in this case the land, is an object, and thus we return to the problematic of the landscape objectified as view, albeit through another route entirely.

Thinking photography as a visual register entails that photographic seeing, considered to be distinct from ordinary vision, enables us to see reality in a way that we have not seen it before. For Susan Sontag, the camera lifts off our "dry wrappers" of "habitual"[79] ordinary vision and it *reveals* the world to us: the reality that photographs show us, as we will see later, is, according to Sontag, *hidden*. However, the camera itself has another habit of seeing which Sontag describes as

> Both intense and cool, solicitous and detached; charmed by the insignificant detail, addicted to incongruity. But photographic seeing has to be constantly renewed with new shocks…so as to produce the

[79] Susan Sontag *On Photography* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002 p.99

> impression of violating ordinary vision. For, challenged by the revelations of photographers, seeing tends to accommodate to photographs.[80]

Sontag's notion that ordinary vision assimilates photographic seeing is pertinent insofar as it betrays a certain attitude towards photographic images. That is, over time, as we become used to seeing the world photographically we begin to forget the differences between these two, as Sontag would have it, *modalities* of vision. And although Sontag argues in favour of the revelations of the photographic, the idea that photographic seeing is itself a habit, implies that the camera sees according to its own conventions, we might therefore ask, does the camera see at all?

The concept of the camera as a surrogate eye, a mechanical seer, becomes particularly problematic when the interventions of the camera are written out of the process and photographs are treated as though they facilitate unmediated contact with the subject. In terms of this thesis, the subject/object dichotomy implied by the camera as mechanical eye requires further interrogation. For the photographic image, taken as an unmediated form of contact with the subject, is transparent: we see the subject through it, rather than an opaque photographic representation of it. The transparency thesis argues that photographs give us natural images, which cannot be taken as representations. The implications of this will be investigated during this chapter, principally in dialogue with Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida*. The evidentiary power of photography is seemingly incontrovertible: even in the case of an image being out of

[80] Ibid.

focus, André Bazin argues that the photograph still has the power "to bear away our faith"[81].

Writing in *The Pencil of Nature*, the photographic pioneer William Henry Fox Talbot described photography as a process by which nature inscribes itself, and if we are to believe that nature inscribes itself photographically, we can argue that photographs give us images which presence the real, in itself: in the photograph, nature is present to itself. It was from this idea of photography as the pencil by which nature faithfully inscribes itself that the sense of the reliability (and transparency) of photographs has been derived. Thus in Fox Talbot's conception of the photograph, we have the notion that photography is a natural process of inscription. André Bazin writes that

> All the arts are based on the presence of man, only photography derives an advantage from his absence. Photography affects us like a phenomenon in nature, like a flower or a snowflake whose vegetable or earthly origins are an inseparable part of their beauty.[82]

For Bazin, it is not possible to separate the aesthetic of the photographic image from its 'earthly origins', for him too photographs are natural images, caused by the phenomena of the world. Photography, from this standpoint, is a form of natural science, it is part of the chemistry of the world. The fixed silver shadow of the subject renders it immortal; the photograph brings the past to presence, which it stores in a chemical museum. In the words of Roland Barthes:

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[81] André Bazin 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image' *What is Cinema?* Volume 1 Berkeley and Los Angeles, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2005 p.14
[82] Ibid. p.13

> the loved body is immortalized by the medium of a precious metal, silver (monument and luxury); to which we might add the notion that this metal, like all the metals of Alchemy, is alive.[83]

According to both Barthes and Bazin, what is distinctive and unique about photography is that it brings the subject to the viewer. The subject is cast in silver; incarnated. However, as Sontag points out in *On Photography*, the programme of photographic realism is full of disagreement.

> This revelatory character of photography generally goes by the polemical name of realism. From Fox Talbot's "natural images" to Berenice Abbott's denunciation of "pictorial" photography to Cartier Bresson's warning that "the thing to be feared most is the artificially contrived," most of the contrary declarations of photographers converge on pious avowals of respect for things-as-they-are.[84]

In spite of the polemical disagreements about the nature of photographic realism, as Sontag makes clear, the contradictory statements that photographers make about their relationship to the real actually cohere around the common respect for 'things-as-they-are.' According to Sontag, the revelations of photography amount to an unveiling of reality[85], the photographic image "shows us reality as we had *not* seen it before."[86] Now, as Sontag demonstrates, it would be wrong to imply that Fox Talbot's notion of the photograph as a natural image is in some sense universally accepted by photographic practitioners. However, this conception of photography is canonised in the late writing on photography by Roland Barthes. It is Barthes' respect for things-as-they-

[83] Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* Richard Howard (trans), London: Vintage, 2000 p.81
[84] Susan Sontag *On Photography* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002 p.119
[85] Ibid p.121
[86] Ibid. p. 119

are, or properly, things-as-they-*were* (i.e. the referent in Barthes' terminology), which enables his mother to be resurrected in the Winter Gardens in a photograph, which is the central, if absent image, in *Camera Lucida*. For Barthes, the referent adheres to the photographic image which leads him to describe the photograph (along with the view of a landscape seen through the pane of a window), as "belonging to that class of laminated objects whose two leaves cannot be separated without destroying them both"[87]. As we shall see later, it is through this particular photograph that Barthes is reunited with his mother: the thing-as-it-*was* touches him from a time which precedes his own existence.

It is important to note that Barthes' commitment to photographic realism is not simply premised upon the ability of the photograph to copy or render a fixed analogue of the real. Barthes' realism is founded upon the photographic touch, which emanates from the subject:

> The realists, of whom I am one and of whom I was already one when I asserted that the Photograph was an image without a code – even if, obviously certain codes do inflect our reading of it – the realists do not take the photograph for a "copy" of reality, but for an emanation of *past reality*: a *magic*, not an art.[88]

This commitment to the realism of photographs, in virtue of their capacity to bring the subject into contact with the viewer, facilitates a contiguity between *spacetimes* which effectively brings the subject to presence. The photograph testifies to the subject's very existence, it is, for Barthes, *physis* not *thesis*. I hope to demonstrate that the notion of the photograph as a natural image is problematic insofar as it denies the artificial,

[87] Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* Richard Howard (trans), London: Vintage, 2000 p.6
[88] Ibid. p.88

constructivist character of photographic practice. I would argue against Barthes, along with the realist's detractors, and say that photography is in fact "*Thesis, not Physis*" [89]. Indeed, later in this chapter I will explore the idea that the practice of photography is often collapsed into the photograph itself, the process disappears into the object: critics and writers disassociate the image from its method or means of production. The end of photography (i.e. the image) is treated as though it had no means, or at least the means have no bearing, upon the final product.

My principal aim in the exegesis of Barthes' ideas on photography is to demonstrate the duality in his thought when writing on intentional and non-intentional photographic images. This develops into a systematic reassertion of the sovereignty of the reader through his utterly subjective account of the significance of the *punctum* in his personal readings of photographs. Barthes' notion that the photograph resists the status of sign, especially in non-intentional photographs (such as the image of Barthes' mother) will be especially significant for the development of my argument that photography is a practice which writes the world which will be undertaken in chapter three. The dualistic tensions of Barthes' theories on photography, between intentional and non-intention images, will be considered in view of Barthes' differing photographic projects and his invocation of the *studium* and the *punctum* in *Camera Lucida*. I observe that there is a peculiar duality in Barthes' writing which emerges in the tensions between the Text and its project of decentring the author (and ultimately the subject), and the reassertion of the author in his final book, *Camera Lucida*. Barthes, the Author, is reborn in grieving for his mother and throughout *Camera Lucida* his subjective responses to specific

[89] Ibid.

photographs demands a theory of photography at the centre of which is Roland Barthes himself. As Colin MacCabe puts it:

> *Camera Lucida* not only dedicates itself to Sartre's *L'Imaginaire* but presupposes as its method a traditional phenomenology in which Barthes takes his own reaction to photographs as the fundamental given of his study.[90]

It can be argued that Barthes' need for the presence of his mother and the transparency of the photographic image leads him to undermine the practice of photography. He writes from the perspective of the Spectator of the photograph rather than its Operator. And whilst Barthes does engage in the discussion of photography as a chemical process, his disregard of the lineage of the medium through painting and the *camera obscura* amounts to a blind spot in his thinking about photography: he cannot see the instrumentality of the camera in the very images he loves. It is not necessarily my intention to reassert the authorial role of the photographer, rather I contend that in forgetting the instruments of photography we misunderstand photographs. If we recall Sontag's argument that photographic seeing has been assimilated into ordinary vision through the accommodation of, or forgetting of, the differences between the two. Whilst his chapter will not itemise the differentials between ordinary vision and photographic seeing, later on Vilém Flusser's argument that photography is an apparatus driven practice will be investigated. We will see in due course that this opens up the possibility of thinking photography as a kind of writing in terms of its capacity to signify theoretical concepts. However, as I will demonstrate, the argument that

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[90] Colin MacCabe 'Barthes and Bazin: The Ontology of the Image' in *Writing the Image After Roland Barthes* Jean-Michel Rabaté (ed) Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997 p.73

this thesis puts forward in favour of photography as writing is structural, rather than conceptual. But we should bear in mind that Flusser warns that if we disregard the history and industry of photography we will have no freedom in our use of the medium, we will be constrained by the photographic apparatus. I intend to explore the Flusserian instrumentality of photographic images in comparison with a reading of photographs as, what Bruno Latour calls a "matter of concern"[91]. For Latour, the matter of concern rather than matter of fact is a means by which problems can be understood in terms of networks or complexes instead of clearly demarcated zones of enquiry. Considered in this way, photography becomes a problematic which includes both images and their methods of production. Arguably, in part it is Barthes' blindness to the instruments of photography which enables him to accept the photograph as natural; magic rather than art.

According to Flusser, the photographer plays against[92] the camera and its programme in order to try to create informative, that is, new images which will enrich the photographic universe. Therefore, a philosophy of photography is an absolute necessity for Flusser:

> The task of a philosophy of photography is to reflect upon this possibility of freedom – and thus its significance – in a world dominated by apparatuses; to reflect upon the way in which, despite everything, it is possible for human beings to give significance to their

[91] Bruno Latour third lecture in the Nature Space Society series at Tate Modern 2004 webcast at www.tatemodern.org.uk/onlineevents/webcasts/nature_space_society/bruno_latour/default.jsp accessed 19.04.2005

[92] Vilèm Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* Anthony Mathews (trans) London: Reaktion Books, 2006 p.27

> lives in face of the chance necessity of death. Such a philosophy is necessary because it is the only form of revolution left open to us.[93]

As we shall see later in the chapter, Flusser warns against photographic illiteracy which suggests that not only are photographs legible for meaning, but that there is something significant at stake should they be *mis*read. I intend to take Flusser at his word and propose that we can find in his text evidence that photographs signify concepts rather than phenomena, which enables us to rethink the practice of photography as a written practice rather than a practice of seeing. Flusser argues that this is why technical images, such as photographs, are ontologically different to traditional, hand made images. This, as I shall demonstrate in the third chapter, will have a profound impact upon our conceptualisation of the relationship between the landscape and its photographic inscriptions.

II The Persistence of the Referent

In his final book, *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes turns his attention away from theorising particular cultural practices of photography, that is, media and advertising photographs, towards a meditation on the meaning of personal photographs. The generative moment of the book, which is retold in the second section, is an evening in November, just after the death of his mother. Barthes is sorting through old photographs in her apartment with little hope that he will find an image which will enable him to completely remember her:

[93] Ibid. p.82

> one of the most agonizing features of mourning, which decreed that however often I might consult such images, I could never recall her features[94]

He is alone, going through her photographs one by one, searching in vain for "the truth of the face I had loved"[95] and suddenly, his mother's face is unexpectedly revealed to him in a photograph of her as a young girl. The faded photograph with blunted corners *showed* Barthes his mother, truly.

> Something like an essence of the Photograph floated in this particular picture. I therefore decided to "derive" all Photography (its "nature") from the only photograph which assuredly existed for me, and to take it as a guide for my last investigation.[96]

Barthes' final meditation on photography becomes a search for the essence of photographs, the genius of photography. The bereaved Barthes has only this image of his mother to testify to her existence, for him, the alchemical mausoleum of the photograph *must* contain an essence of her, for it is his only assurance of a durable connection between himself and his mother: the Winter Garden Photograph is her *lasting presence*.

Indeed, as far as Barthes is concerned, without the subject, the photograph is effectively empty, it is a "weightless, transparent envelope"[97], in danger of floating away without the referent to act as ballast. But what is significant in *Camera Lucida* is that of all the images that Barthes saw, only one holds the complete essence of his mother, this image of her at the age of five, taken in 1898. Barthes' idea that The

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[94] Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* Richard Howard (trans), London: Vintage, 2000 p.63
[95] Ibid. p.67
[96] Ibid. p.73
[97] Ibid. p.5

Photograph can bring the subject to presence is reminiscent of Susan Sontag's argument that the realism of photography is a unique system for disclosing the real:

> All that photography's program of realism actually implies is the belief that reality is hidden. And, being hidden, is something to be unveiled. Whatever the camera records is a disclosure. [98]

However, for Barthes, the disclosures of photography are not automatic, which is demonstrated by the fact that only one of the images of his mother truly encapsulates all that (for Barthes) she stood for. He writes how he finds partial disclosures of her in a number of old photographs but in these he "recognized her differentially, not essentially."[99] And in their partial truths, these photographs are false:

> Photography thereby compelled me to perform a painful labor; straining towards the essence of her identity, I was struggling amongst images partially true, and therefore totally false.[100]

The notion of the subject in difference suggested by Barthes' words will be highly significant later in this thesis. However, for the meantime, let us observe that it is critical that Barthes' rediscovery of his mother in the Winter Garden Photograph puts him in contact with her from a time prior to his own existence. As we will see in due course, this photograph is Historic for Barthes. The disclosure of his mother's essence in this image is a kind of *anamnesis*, or recollection, indeed Barthes writes of the general capacity of photographs to provoke this:

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[98] Susan Sontag *On Photography* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002 pp.120-121
[99] Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* Richard Howard (trans), London: Vintage, 2000 p.66
[100] Ibid.

> No anamnesis could ever make me glimpse this time starting from myself (this is the definition of anamnesis) – whereas, contemplating a photograph in which she is hugging me, a child, against her, I can waken in myself the rumpled softness of her crêpe de Chine and the perfume of her rice powder.[101]

But *anamnesis*, especially in the Catholic theological sense constitutes far more that a recollection. *Anamnesis* brings the past into the present; for example, it is through the sacrament of the Eucharist that Christ is brought to presence.

> According to Catholic theology, the Eucharist, the consecrated bread and wine, is not just a token that helps us remember Jesus by going back to the now of then: it actually makes him present under a different form now. By definition, a sacrament is a sign that does more than point to something else…it makes the mystery pointed to present, makes then now. In technical language, it effects what it signifies.[102]

The body of Jesus Christ is brought to presence through the ceremonial usage of bread and wine: Christ literally *is* the bread and the wine. And for Barthes, the loved body of his mother is brought to presence through the time capsule that is the photograph. However, significantly this does not rely upon a sacramental transformation, for Barthes' mother is not transmogrified in the sepia of the photographic image, rather he sees through this brown colouration *to* the essence of his mother. The Barthesean photograph transects time and space to bring a universe,

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[101] Ibid. p.65
[102] Richard Holloway 'The Now of Then' in *Will Maclean: Different Meridians* London: Art First, 2008

otherwise inaccessible, into the experiential, perceptual space of the viewer.

Barthes attributes the evidentiary power of photographs to the fact that these images are not humanly made (unlike drawings). His fascination with photographs as magical emanations endows them with a spiritual quality.

> Photography has something to do with resurrection: might we not say of it what the Byzantines said of the image of Christ which impregnated St. Veronica's napkin: that it was not made by the hand of man, *acheiropoietos*?[103]

Here Barthes refers to the story of St. Veronica upon whose veil Christ wiped his face and left an imprint, a true likeness, (*vera icon*). Christ's image is made manifest upon the veil by divine touch and those who look upon it are, in turn, touched by him. It seems that, for Barthes, photography is not simply mechanical, but spiritual. The photograph is a physical manifestation of the subject, which travels, unchanging, through time: the paper upon which it is printed is a reliquary of the once living body. The immediacy of the true likeness has the power to resurrect the subject.

For Barthes, writing in *Camera Lucida*, the Photograph of the Operator is of little interest as it lies outside of his experience, therefore, he writes from the position of the Spectator. Indeed, according to Barthes, the chemical revelations of the photograph, which are received by deferral by the Spectator, are precisely what makes photographs compelling. For the

[103] Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* Richard Howard (trans), London: Vintage, 2000 p.82

Spectator of the photograph, the optical device is subordinate to the chemical process, the means by which the subject can be frozen in time. For the *noeme* of photography is, as far as Barthes is concerned, "That-has-been"[104]; it is a mausoleum.

The power of photography for Barthes, is therefore its capacity to "recover"[105] the image of a loved body from the past. He writes in 'Rhetoric of the Image' that "the image is re-presentation, which is to say ultimately resurrection".[106] According to Barthes, the "That-has-been" of photography opens a new space time, which brings *here-now* into contact with *there-then*, the *noeme* of photography is its capacity to bring these temporal discontinuities into spatial contiguity:

> What we have here is a new space time category: spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority, the photograph being an illogical conjunction between the *here-now* and the *there-then*.[107]

The ideal Barthesean photograph is not a simulacrum but a manifestation of the subject; the photograph, in these terms, brings the subject into an eternal now. But, as we have already seen, not all of the photographs Barthes encountered on that evening in November possessed the power of the 1898 image; the other photographs contained only partial disclosures of his mother. It is Barthes' exclusion from the experience of the originary moment of the photographic which is significant. Thus the very definition of the 1898 image as Historical is pivotal to Barthes' interest in it:

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[104] Ibid. p.80
[105] Ibid. p.82
[106] Roland Barthes 'Rhetoric of the Image' *Image Music Text* Stephen Heath (trans and selected) London: Fontana Press, 1977 p.32
[107] Ibid. p.44

> Thus the life of someone whose existence has somewhat preceded our own encloses in its particularity the very tension of History, its division. History is hysterical: it is constituted only if we consider it, only if we look at it – and in order to look at it, we must be excluded from it. As a living soul, I am the very contrary of History, I am what belies it, destroys it for the sake of my own history (impossible for me to believe in "witnesses"; impossible at least, to be one…That is what the time when my mother was alive *before me* is – History.[108]

The hysterical nature of History which Barthes speaks of is the division in time, which is allied to the moment of his birth. History is *annihilated* by the birth of the individual and the *hysteria* of History is its association with the womb, the womb of Barthes' mother, through which *he* was brought to presence. Barthes cannot see his mother in those other photographs because he cannot witness her from within his own lifetime. It is only the separation from his mother, through an intervening History, which triggers his ability to act as witness to her benign and generous nature revealed in this faded photograph. Barthes needs this temporal separation in order to see clearly.

The disclosure of Barthes' mother in the Winter Garden Photograph, sets in motion the writing of his last book which is a rediscovery of Barthes' relationship with his mother through the photographic medium. *Camera Lucida* is more a psychological exploration of photography and less a sociological investigation into the role of the family photograph. In Barthes' late photographic universe, the persistence of the referent is crucial: the *studium* of photography is merely of polite interest to him; whereas the *punctum* of certain photographs subjectively moves him,

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[108] Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* Richard Howard (trans), London: Vintage, 2000 p.65

their details poignantly wounding him. The *studium* and the *punctum* are thus two key themes of photography for Barthes, the *studium* is always coded, encrypted, whereas the *punctum* is not. It is personal; the referent motivates the observer *via* the *punctum*, rather than the observer's "sovereign consciousness"[109] directing the referent *via* the *studium*. The *studium* mediates the emotional response to photographs by the codified structures of politics or history. The *studium* is an 'average' effect of cultural training.

> It is by studium that I am interested in so many photographs, whether I receive them as political testimony or enjoy them as good historical scenes: for it is *culturally* (this connotation is present in *studium*) that I participate in the figures, the faces, the settings, the actions.[110]

However, the *punctum* ruptures the *studium* and motivates the Spectator directly. The *punctum* is in the detail of the image and it is entirely subjective:

> The second element will break (or punctuate) the *studium*. This time it is not I who seek it out (as I invest the field of *studium* with my sovereign consciousness), it is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me.[111]

The *punctum* is accidental, it cannot be controlled by the photographer, or indeed the Spectator, the *punctum* undermines the intentional meaning of the photograph. The *punctum* is 'supplementary' to the referent, it is a punctuation within the experience of looking at the photograph: pointedly emotional:

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[109] Ibid. p.26
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.

> A photograph's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me).[112]

Thus the *punctum* of the photograph, in opposition to the pure *studium* of media or advertising photography, is personally significant, that is, the experience is incommunicable to any other person. Barthes says: "What I can name cannot really prick me."[113] This, argues James Elkins in *Photography Theory*, suppresses discussion, theory and discourse: "the *punctum* is solipsistic…it closes down dialogue and discourse"[114]. The dart of the *punctum* shoots from the referent to Roland Barthes, sometimes catching him unawares, but always catching *him*: the referent touches Barthes through the photograph.

> The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here; the duration of the transmission is insignificant; the photograph of the missing being, as Sontag says, will touch me like the delayed rays of a star. A sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin I share with anyone who has been photographed.[115]

The radiation of light from the referent, cemented and carnalised by the medium of photography, ties the body of the photographed to the gaze of the observer like a thread. Barthes calls it a kind of umbilical cord,

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[112] Ibid. p.27
[113] Ibid. p.51
[114] James Elkins 'The Art Seminar' *Photography Theory* New York; London: Routledge, 2007 p.157
[115] Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* Richard Howard (trans), London: Vintage, 2000 pp. 80-81

recalling the generative image of the book. Insofar as the *punctum* is the cause of a purely subjective response to the referent in the photograph, the photographic image cannot be thought as a sign, indeed the *punctum* undermines the photograph's capacity to function semiotically. The photograph is, to use the words of Rosalind Krauss, "the index that is caught at the heel by the object from which it is cast"[116] and for Barthes, the pure contingency of the photograph puts it outside meaning because it is unable to signify the general. The photograph is unmarked:

> Photography is unclassifiable because there is no reason to *mark* this or that of its occurrences; it aspires, perhaps, to become as crude, as certain, as noble as a sign, which would afford it access to the dignity of a language: but for there to be a sign there must be a mark; deprived of a principle of marking, photographs are signs which don't *take*, which *turn*, as milk does. Whatever it grants to vision and whatever its manner, a photograph is always invisible: it is not it that we see.[117]

Therefore, according to Barthes, the photograph cannot be a sign because signification relies upon differentiation and markedness. In order for there to be a sign, the signifier and the signified must be semiotically marked, or codified, that is, differenced from all other signifiers and signifieds. For Barthes, photographs are unmarked insofar as they are indistinguishable from the world. The photograph is a sign which does not *take*, that is to say, the signifier and the signified do not stick but separate, curdling like milk. The referent is held in suspension in the transparent body of the photograph, floating in the whey in the form of a solidified curd. This leads Barthes to contend that it is always the subject, not the

[116] Rosalind Krauss 'X Marks the Spot' *Rachel Whiteread: shedding life* p.81
[117] Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* Richard Howard (trans), London: Vintage, 2000 p.6

photograph that the Spectator sees. The putative transparency of Barthes' photograph sets up a relationship between spectator and photograph which renders the means of photographic production invisible.

III Natural Icons

For Barthes, the syntagm, or surface structure of the photograph is natural, it is an imprint or stencil of the referent. It is given in virtue of the fact that the photograph is an analogue of reality. As far as Barthes is concerned, the same could not be said of a painting or a drawing, for these kinds of images are connotative, or coded, from the outset, drawing is "*rule-governed*"[118]. I will explore the problems with this in due course, but for the time being, let us look a little more closely at Barthes' thoughts on this. Whilst the natural icon supports connotation, which we discussed briefly in chapter one in terms of Barthes' writing on myth, fundamentally for Barthes, photographic images cannot function according to Saussurrean semiology because photographs are not arbitrary. The photograph is an analogue of the world, or indeed an emanation of it. Therefore photographs do not have a digital code, and, furthermore, they do not have a double articulation. That is to say, photographic signs, i.e. signs which supervene on a putatively natural syntagm, are not underpinned by smaller units, as words are (*phonemes* in speech and *graphemes* in writing). Thus photographs are not artificial like language but, essentially, Barthes argues, they are natural, uncodified.

[118] Ibid. p.43

> the photograph (in its literal state), by virtue of its absolutely analogical nature, seems to constitute a message without a code.[119]

As we saw in the previous chapter, the objects in the denotative, natural image generate meanings according to available cultural codes. Albeit uncoded (in Barthes' view), the intentional photograph does constitute a message. In Barthes' earlier writing on photography we can see that although the photograph is not linguistic, it supports second order signification, or myth. And as we saw previously for Barthes, it is the manner in which the two messages in the photograph (the coded icon and the uncoded icon) interact with one another which invests the intentional photograph with a pseudo-truth. The naturalisation of the symbolic message affords intentional images like advertising posters a certain power. The natural manifestation - "a kind of natural *being-there* of objects"[120] is allied with the practice of connotation which enables these indisputable copies of the world to support a range of meanings.

Whilst we must remember that in 'Rhetoric of the Image' Barthes writes of intentional, culturally meaningful images, whereas in *Camera Lucida* his concern is far more personal, nevertheless, we can draw parallels between the images in each text. The codified *studium* is an intentional image which supports cultural meanings, whereas, the uncodified *punctum* is the denotative, unintended received prick of a detail in the photograph which enables the past to be accessed from the present. It is the denotative capacity of photographs which allows Barthes to be touched by the image of his mother, the touch is a "treasury of rays" which "emanated from…her hair, her skin, her dress, her gaze, *on that*

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[119] Roland Barthes 'Rhetoric of the Image' in *Image Music Text* Stephen Heath (trans and selected) London: Fontana Press, 1977 pp. 42-43
[120] Ibid. p.45

day."[121] It is important to stress that for any other reader, the Winter Garden Photograph would be pure *studium*, culturally not emotionally significant.

Barthes' realist ontology of photographic images rests upon his argument that the surface structures of photographs are natural. However, Barthes does commit to a photographic realism which can be semiotically manipulated to generate *pseudo* truths. The meaning of images, that is the *myth* of photographs, is, for Barthes, generated by practices and readings which play on their naturalness, enabling photographs to present powerful naturalisations of cultural messages: the photographic image bathes the message in "lustral innocence"[122]. Barthes' notion that photographs transparently presence the subject, that they are incarnated in the natural surface of the image, gives us the idea that photographs are natural states of things. In their literal state, Barthesean photographs are naïve and innocent analogues of the real; they are facts of the world, with juridical functions in society: seeing is believing. The possibility of the separation of Barthes' thesis on photography – early and late – is difficult insofar as his earlier writings seeks out the mythic function of photography, whereas his late commitment is to the living photograph which preserves the loved body. This forces Barthes to write about two *kinds* of photography, a distinction which is untenable. Indeed, Colin MacCabe argues that Barthes' late writing on the subject does not adequately reference the influence of André Bazin. In addition to this, it is MacCabe's contention that Barthes does not construct a sufficient argument in

[121] Ibid. p.82
[122] Roland Barthes 'Rhetoric of the Image' *Image, Music, Text* Stephen Heath (trans and selected) London: Fontana Press, 1977 p.43

defence of the referent's adherence to the subject[123], which we shall touch on a little later.

However, I conjecture that Barthes' insistence on the transparency of photographs and his consequent denial of the photographic apparatus in *Camera Lucida* is deeply problematic, not because his argument writes the photographer out of the process, but because he writes a significant part of the process out of photography. Although Barthes does argue in favour of the chemical process, this is purely from the point of view that this process enables the subject in the photograph to be manifested for the Spectator, it is upon this that, for Barthes, pure photographic contingency turns. Indeed, his argument that the photograph of the Spectator is chemical, revelatory and unconcerned with the photographic apparatus, assumes that the photographic process is merely a means to re-present the referent in the amniotic fluid of the photographic image: the subject is *revealed* by development and fixing, by chemical processing.

However, in Barthes' ideal image of his mother a kind of mysterious mediation is brought into play. The 1898 image is more than an analogue copy, the truth, the essence of his mother, is produced by the photographer, not the equipment itself:

> The unknown photographer of Chennevières-sur-Marne had been the mediator of a truth…he had produced a supererogatory photograph

[123] Colin MacCabe 'Barthes and Bazin: The Ontology of the Image' in *Writing the Image After Roland Barthes* Jean-Michel Rabaté (ed) Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997 p.73

> which contained more than that what the technical being of photography can reasonably offer.[124]

The analogue copy is supplemented by the action of the photographer who reveals much more in his image than could be technically expected of the medium. The image of Barthes' mother is not simply a copy; it has an *aura*. Barthes goes on to write that "the Winter Garden Photograph was indeed essential, it achieved for me, utopically, *the impossible science of a unique being*."[125] The presence of his mother in the photograph, entails that the image attains the impossible: the complete expression of his mother's uniqueness. The photograph is a perfect state: but this state is utopian; it is imaginary.

Barthes' emotional investment in the image and his reticence to have it printed, means that in effect, we are discussing a non-existent image (or rather there is no evidence of its existence aside from Barthes' testimony). But as he intimates in *Camera Lucida*, to reproduce the image would be inconsequential, for it would be read as pure *studium*: the photograph could not wound the emotionally detached viewer as it had Barthes. However, the photograph's capacity to embody the perfect state of his mother's being, is by Barthes' own admission, imagined: his belief in this image is an act of faith. Liliane Weissberg writes that

> Camera Lucida is a book not only about photography but also about an absent photograph, one that is merely described and perhaps wished for. It stands for Barthes' desire itself.[126]

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[124] Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* Richard Howard (trans), London: Vintage, 2000 p.70
[125] Ibid. p.71
[126] Liliane Weissberg 'The Photographic Exchange' in *Writing the Image After Roland Barthes* Jean-Michel Rabaté (ed) Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1997 p.113

The absent image parallels the absent mother and we are pressed to feel the acuteness of Roland Barthes' loss.

The photographic moment can only ever be experienced at a remove: both the operator and the spectator are excluded from it. Barthes is blind, I believe intentionally, to the innovation, industry and science which enables his mother to be revealed and the mausoleum of the photograph to be entered. As a practising photographer, I find it strange to think about the revelation of Barthes' mother as a supplement brought into play by the photographer. As we shall see in due course, the photographer is constrained by the apparatus, which as Vilèm Flusser argues, the photographer plays against in order to create novel images, which are nonetheless predetermined by the photographic programme. Whilst there are problems with Flusser's argument, which will be discussed later in this chapter, the notion that the photographer was responsible for the mediation of a truth in The Winter Garden Photograph, on this one singular occasion, is deeply suspect. But if the instruments of photography begin to be taken into consideration, we grasp that the photographic moment is not so much revealed as (re)constructed.

Barthes discounts the Operator's photograph insofar as it is beyond his experience: he is not a maker of photographs, not even an amateur. He professes himself far too impatient for this; rather his function is as a consumer of images. Whilst searching for an account of photographs which are personally meaningful for him, Barthes elides the mechanism of photography, the apparatus which makes the Photograph (of the Operator and Spectator) possible. The weightless contingency of Roland Barthes' photographic image, with their operators and apparatuses hidden from view, belies the method of its own production. Barthes, so

desperate to find his mother, it seems, could *only* see his mother. Blinded by the referent, the spectator of the Barthesean photograph sees only the past. The photographed past comes up to meet us in the present: the photograph presences the past.

IV The Photograph as Technical Image

In Barthes' late writings, the theory of the text and his emotional account of the significance of photography diverge. This leads, on the one hand, to a body of work which explores text and its open structure, a field rather than a material object, and on the other, to the book *Camera Lucida*, which is emotional and personal. *Camera Lucida* calls for a personal, almost sacred reading of photographs: *punctum*, rather than *studium*. The increasing opacity of the text, subject to dilatory diversions of meaning via a chain of signifiers, is offset in Barthes' writings on photography by a movement from translucency to transparency. The referent, bracketed by Saussurean linguistics is, in Barthes' late photographic writing, resurrected in the photograph, a natural image. The photograph and the text peel away from one another; where the text is mobile, its meaning subject to deferral, the significance of the personal photograph is assured: it is a resurrection, an incarnation of the loved body laid down in salts of silver.

However, even writing in *Camera Lucida*, Barthes cannot quite dispense with the cultural importance of photographs to incite thought. He writes that in " 'good' photographs the *object* speaks, it induces us, vaguely, to think."[127] Making the world speak through photographs is a theme to which we will return in later chapters, but for the time being let us simply

[127] Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* Richard Howard (trans), London: Vintage, 2000 p. 38

observe that for Barthes, the value of successful photographs is their ability to make the world speak, and to provoke thoughtfulness in the observer. He writes:

> Ultimately, Photography is subversive not when it frightens, repels, or even stigmatizes, but when it is *pensive*, when it thinks.[128]

The revolutionary possibilities for photography lie in its capacity to be thoughtful. The freedom of the photographic is as a thinking process, a medium which incites us to think, however vaguely. This notion of photographic freedom arising from thoughtful revolution is the ultimate conclusion of Vilém Flusser's *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*. A philosophy of photography, in a world governed and controlled by apparatuses, is, in his words "the only form of revolution left open to us."[129] Philosophically aware photography, that is reflexive practice, is an expression of freedom.

I would now like to turn my attention to Flusser's text in order to begin to question Roland Barthes' thinking regarding the transparency of the photograph and what I perceive to be his blindness in the face of the instrumentality of photography. As we have seen, for Barthes, it is as if the camera does not exist and although he purports to be writing from the point of view of the Spectator rather than the Operator, the absence of engagement with the mechanics of photographic images constitutes a fundamental lack of understanding regarding the significance of how they come to be. I intend to focus on *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* by Vilém Flusser because the apparatus plays an important

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[128] Ibid.
[129] Vilém Flusser *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* Anthony Mathews (trans) London: Reaktion Books, 2006 p.82

role in his thinking about photography. In this book, the photograph is imbricated in its techniques of production and by focussing my attention on this reading of photography, we begin to find a way of illuminating Barthes' blind spot. The apparatus of photography elucidated by Flusser will then be looked at in relation to the writing of Bruno Latour whose notion of the *imbroglio* is of direct relevance. However, firstly, I will look at Flusser's ideas regarding the photograph as technical image, an image of concepts rather than natural analogue. I will then consider what the significance of this might be in terms of the conception of photographic realism.

The photograph is a technical image, and, according to Flusser, technical images are produced by apparatuses. The significance of the camera in terms of a philosophy of apparatuses is the fact that it can be treated as a "prototype"[130] for the analysis of other apparatuses:

> those apparatuses that, on the one hand, assume gigantic size, threatening to disappear from our field of vision (like the apparatus of management) and, on the other hand, shrivel up, becoming microscopic in size so as to totally escape our grasp (like the chips in electronic apparatuses).[131]

The technical image is produced by the apparatus of the camera and as such, it is *informed* by its apparatus. Flusser argues that technical images are "metacodes of texts which…signify texts, not the world out there."[132] Rather than accepting the photograph as a natural image which is uncoded, as Barthes argues photographs are in their literal state, Flusser

[130] Ibid. p.21
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid. p.15

states that the technical image is in fact difficult to decode because it is treated as though it is objective. But according to Flusser, this is simply an illusion.

> Technical images are difficult to decode, for a strange reason. To all appearance, they do not have to be decoded since their significance (the finger) is the cause and the image (the copy) is the consequence.[133]

Barthes argues that the referent persists in the photograph, that it is made apparent through the surface of the photographic image. The putative transparency of photographic images causes them to be treated as though they are windows through which the world, as it really is, can be seen. By thinking photographic images in this way, as we saw in the earlier analysis of Barthes, we are in danger of misapprehending photographs due to a lack of critical enquiry into their status as the technical products of apparatuses. Flusser writes that to think the photograph as window entails that "[t]heir criticism is not an analysis of their production but an analysis of the world."[134] Indeed, as we will see in due course, there is an argument to be made that the referent does not persist in the photograph at all, the photograph is the text of a text. In any case, the significant point here is that the technical image demonstrates that photographs are indeed rule governed, they are humanly made.

Technical images, argues Flusser, are ontologically different to traditional images because as the products of apparatuses they are *informed* by applied theoretical texts.

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[133] Ibid. p.14
[134] Ibid. p.15

> The technical image is an image produced by apparatuses. As apparatuses themselves are the products of applied scientific texts, in the case of technical images one is dealing with the indirect products of scientific texts. This gives them, historically and ontologically, a position that is different from that of traditional images…Ontologically, traditional images signify phenomena whereas technical images signify concepts.[135]

Thus the scientific, political, social and historical dimension of photography is tied to the development of photographic equipment and materials, which affects the photographic way of seeing, which has been eloquently demonstrated by Susan Sontag to be distinct from ordinary vision.[136] However, as Flusser states above, technical images differ from traditional images in virtue of the fact that they are produced by apparatuses. The ontological difference between these kinds of images is, for Flusser, based upon the fact that traditional images signify phenomena, whereas technical images signify *concepts*. Therefore, if we are to apply Flusser's definition of technical images to photographs, the notion of photographic seeing must be treated as *metaphorical*.

Indeed, according to Jonathan Crary, writing in *Techniques of the Observer*, the model of the ideal spectator as an extension of the *camera obscura* is radically undermined by the developments in understanding visual perception which took place at the start of the eighteenth century. It was at this time that discoveries were made regarding the stimulation of the visual cortex by means other than through the eyes. The camera therefore merely simulates the eye, which, for Flusser, is only one aspect of

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[135] Vilém Flusser *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* Anthony Mathews (trans) London: Reaktion Books, 2006 p.14
[136] Susan Sontag *On Photography* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002 p. 97

the camera as apparatus. As the technical image signifies concepts, photographs are more like ways of thinking than ways of seeing: the camera gives us theoretical images which are there to be decoded, rather than facilitating transparent visual access to the real. To treat the photograph as the product of technicised, monocular vision amounts to a misinterpretation of the camera as a disembodied spectator. Not only does this miss the cerebral, interpretive aspect of vision, this definition of the camera is problematic insofar as it gives us an image of the camera as an ideal subject which objectifies the world under its monocular gaze. Instead of thinking photography in terms of photographic seeing, or photographs as representations of vision, I believe that it is more productive to think of the practice of photography as *inscriptive*, and by extension, following Flusser, as the inscription of photographic concepts.

According to Flusser, the image made by the camera, facilitated by the functionary (the photographer), is inscribed by the science(s) that enabled their invention: optics (and later, with the advent of colour photography, chemistry). The concepts which photographic images demonstrate are optical and chemical theories.

> 'Black' and 'white' are concepts e.g. theoretical concepts of optics. As black-and-white states of things are theoretical, they can never actually exist in the world. But black-and-white photographs do actually exist because they are images of concepts belonging to the theory of optics, i.e. they arise out of this theory…Grey is the colour of theory: which shows that one cannot reconstruct the world anymore from a theoretical analysis. Black-and-white photographs illustrate this fact: They are grey, they are theoretical images.[137]

[137] Ibid. p.42

If we cannot reconstruct the world from a theoretical analysis, as Flusser states, it can be argued that photographic representations of the world present us with new constructions of the world. The grey, theoretical image, far from being a lifeless and drab *re*construction of the world is in fact the opening onto a new world, a world that has been inscribed on a light sensitive surface, granular and opaque. The photograph is not natural and unmarked, it is a cultural inscription, marked out by the technology which created it: the photograph is written.

If photography owes little to ordinary vision, but is a means of recording that we happen to call photographic 'seeing', it could be said that photography represents, not vision, but its own conditions of existence.

Photography has its own idiom; indeed one could even say it *is* its own idiom. To argue that photography is its own idiom is to propose that photographic images are the private property of the camera. Although seemingly strange, there is an element of logic in this, particularly in view of Flusser's argument that the camera is a black box: it is impenetrable by the photographer who merely inputs data from the outside.

The Continued Saga of an Amateur Photographer, Stephen Pippin

The technical interpretations of the photographic intervention are the presentations of the grammar of the medium itself. Perhaps uniquely amongst the visual arts, photography is idiomatic in the etymological sense of the word. The secretive, mechanised box, inscribes its own reality onto light sensitive materials.[138] The properties of the images are private in the sense that they are photography's own, that they emerge from the

[138] The photographic work of Stephen Pippin is interesting in this regard as he converts everyday objects into cameras. In *The Continued Saga of an Amateur Photographer*, Pippin customises a British Rail toilet in order for it to function as a camera, which he uses to photograph the toilet cubicle. However, the toilet bowl informs the image – rather than being *tabula plana* the light sensitive surface is curved and the toilet flush dispenses the photographic chemicals. In a delightful and somewhat surreal way, the toilet seems to be photographing itself.

darkness and it is only by photographic method that they can be revealed. Photography inserts its own habits of recording, which we erroneously accept as analogous to our vision. But even if the camera had an eye, it would not be innocent. Indeed Flusser writes:

> There is no such thing as a naïve, non-conceptual photography. A photograph is an image of concepts. In this sense, all photographers' criteria are contained within the camera's program.[139]

Photographic realism is not necessarily the manifestation of the world, or even the world seen, but the revelation of the world inscribed photographically. The photograph is a picture of the world from inside the darkened box of the camera, which is sealed and operated from the outside: it excludes the photographer at the very point where visionary control is desired. The camera points in on itself, it ingests the world and the photographic intervention lies latent in the surface of the film until the appropriate chemicals reveal and solidify it.

The Continued Saga of an Amateur Photographer, Stephen Pippin

What photography shows us is its own discourse on the world, partially hidden, in wait inside the darkened camera. And the photograph

[139] Vilém Flusser *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* Anthony Mathews (trans) London: Reaktion Books, 2006 p.36

manifests the momentary blindness of the photographer, an image of the blink in the photographer's vision: a blind spot. As I will demonstrate in a later chapter, this blindness is a generative trope within my own practice. It is a means by which I explore the landscape photographically enabling the deconstruction, and reconstruction, of the view.

V The Culture of Nature

As we saw earlier in this chapter, the notion that the photographic syntagm is natural and it produces a magical emanation of the subject, is central to Barthes' writing on photography. At the start of the first chapter, it was intimated that certain binary oppositions would be investigated throughout the course of this thesis, in particular, nature/culture, which impacts not only on photography but also landscape. As I hope to demonstrate in the chapter which follows this, we will see that these binary oppositions are not fundamental or essential, but, as we saw in the previous chapter, as Jacques Derrida argues, they are produced by *différance*. However, for the time being at least, I intend to discuss the idea posited by the contemporary French philosopher Bruno Latour, that 'nature' is contested, it is a term which is subject to dispute. Latour's argument is, to an extent, Derridean, as he contends that systems and institutions produce truths rather than disclose them. I would now like to spend some time presenting Latour's argument regarding the relationship between nature and politics in order to demonstrate that our reliance on an uncritical definition of nature is problematic.

Now one might legitimately ask, what has this to do with photography? It is my contention that what Latour says about nature is consistent with Flusser's argument regarding the photograph and in tandem these

arguments nullify Barthes' claims for the transparency of photography. In short, Latour's means of questioning ecology's capacity to know nature transparently is consistent with our questioning of the Barthesean Photograph's capacity to transparently show the world. In addition, Latour's argument regarding the politics of nature forces us to reconsider our relation with the natural world. Although the focus of this thesis is on landscapes which lie broadly within the concern of the 'new topographers', that is man-altered landscapes, what J.B. Jackson terms as 'synthetic spaces', it is important not to gloss over or ignore the significance of nature within the thesis.

According to Latour, it is only the West which has conceptualised a separation between humans and the natural world, i.e. culture, and nature, "humans and non-humans"[140]. Nature is treated by the West as an original category: the teleological movement of Western civilization is the transition from nature to culture, indeed, in terms of etymology of the word, culture originates in the cultivation of the natural. The conceptualisation of culture as a "cultivation of the mind, manners, etc."[141] arises in the sixteenth century, whilst during the century prior to this, culture denoted a piece of tilled land. Thus bound in the term culture we have notions of the cultivation of land and mind, and the improvement of nature: the body becomes an extension of the land, a place of refinement and improvement, gradually being moulded and tilled until the natural body is cultured. The socialised (and intellectualised) body is defined, and indeed defines itself, in contradistinction to nature. The category 'nature', is the ground from which human culture, in the West,

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[140] Bruno Latour *We Have Never Been Modern* Catherine Porter (trans), Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993 p.104

[141] *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, Charles Talbot Onions (ed), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978 p.235

emerges. The state of nature is written as the origin or wellspring of Western civilization: the land tilled by history and progress (and sin).

In Bruno Latour's book *The Politics of Nature*, his hypothesis is that the terms politics and nature need to be rethought to enable a comprehensive theoretical enquiry into political ecology and the problem of how to make the Sciences democratic. Although politics, and indeed political ecology are not central to this thesis, Latour's conception of the relation between the instruments and protocols of Science and the natural world is, I shall demonstrate, pertinent. In *The Politics of Nature*, Latour seeks to reconfigure the Gordian knot generated by dichotomies such as 'man and nature' or 'subject and object'. He writes: "I am going to shake it around in a lot of different ways. I shall untie a few of its strands in order to knot them back together differently."[142]

Nature, is the site of cultural and political disagreements and according to Latour, part of the problem for political ecology is generated by the absence of any kind of challenge to the concept of an external, unified nature. However, he argues that nature is an extremely complex term, which is culturally and politically motivated, and multivalent insofar as it is constituted by the user's viewpoint. When Ferdinand de Saussure discussed his endeavour to theorise linguistics from the position of the speaker, he stated:

> Far from it being the object that antedates the viewpoint, it would seem that it is the viewpoint that creates the object[143]

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[142] Bruno Latour *The Politics of Nature how to bring the sciences into democracy* Catherine Porter (trans), Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004 p.3
[143] Ferdinand de Saussure 'The Linguistic Sign' from *Course in General Lingustics* reprinted in *Semiotics: an introductory reader* ed Robert E. Innis London: Hutchison & Co., 1986 p. 28

This parallels Latour's notion that nature is defined according to the use to which it is to be put. The definition of nature is dependent upon the individual speaker, or group of speakers. In this sense, the varying conceptions of nature is *parole* rather than *langue*, and from our earlier investigations, we have explored the notion that Roland Barthes would say that it is myth.

This slippery definition of nature,[144] clustered around varying viewpoints gives rise to a complex embroilment of politics, nature and science, in which political ecology is not at all clearly defined.

> To be close to nature is not to be close to outside, indisputable entities but to be inside dispute.[145]

The Latourean *imbroglio* is a confusion of politics, science and nature which cannot be adequately analysed by an intellectual field which is separated into distinct etymological frameworks, and arranged according to different disciplines. Latour argues that this separation (the slicing of the Gordian knot) has produced a "crisis of the critical stance"[146] because these complex, hybrid intellectual situations are almost unthinkable due to the way that they are divided by the different epistemic frameworks: their totality cannot be embraced. A single

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[144] Latour also argues that culture cannot be defined: "How can one not establish a radical difference between universal Nature and relative culture? But *the very notion of culture is an artefact created by bracketing Nature off*. Cultures – different or universal – do not exist, any more than Nature does." *We Have Never Been Modern* p.104

[145] Bruno Latour third lecture in the Nature Space Society series at Tate Modern 2004 webcast at www.tatemodern.org.uk/onlineevents/webcasts/nature_space_society/bruno_latour/default.jsp accessed 01.07.2008

[146] Bruno Latour *We Have Never Been Modern* Catherine Porter (trans), Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993 p.5

episteme cannot encompass the entire problematic, in effect the whole situation is unable to be seen from a singular viewpoint:

> Can anyone imagine a study that would treat the ozone hole as simultaneously naturalized, sociologized and deconstructed? A study in which the nature of the phenomena might be firmly established and the strategies of power predictable, but nothing would be at stake but meaning effects that project the pitiful illusions of a nature and a speaker?…We may glorify the science, play power games or make fun of the belief in reality, but we must not mix these three caustic acids.[147]

It is as though the *episteme*, theorised according to Michel Foucault as "a time- and culture-bound framework of discourse"[148] is unable to contain this multiplicity of viewpoints, which perpetuates the "crisis of the critical stance"[149] which Latour writes about. This leads to a number of *epistemes* being brought into play which inevitably run into conflict. I would argue that this crisis of objectivity is the inevitable result of interdisciplinarity. Interdisciplinarity forces us to assume multiple viewpoints and challenges fixed intellectual positions.

Latour and his colleagues, described by Latour himself in *We Have Never Been Modern*, as intellectual hybrids, have been committed to the study of the proliferation of these complex hybrid networks, attempting to retie the Gordian knot which has been sliced by the respective epistemological positions:

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[147] Ibid. p.6
[148] *Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy* Mautner, Thomas (ed) London: Penguin 2000 p. 174
[149] Bruno Latour *We Have Never Been Modern* Catherine Porter (trans), Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993 p.5

> Whatever label we use we are always attempting to retie the Gordian knot by crisscrossing…the divide that separates exact knowledge and the exercise of power – let us say nature and culture. Hybrids ourselves, installed lopsidedly within scientific institutions, half engineers and half philosophers, '*tiers instruits*' (Serres 1991) without having sought the role, we have chosen to follow the imbroglios wherever they take us. To shuttle back and forth, we rely on the notion of translation, or network.[150]

The retying of the Gordian knot is the progressive interweaving between disciplines to create networks which facilitate connectivity between separate *epistemes*. This intertextual metaphor for interdisciplinarity is pertinent as it demonstrates the multiple and sometimes conflicting roles required in interdisciplinary practice. Additionally, this shows the difficulty of interdisciplinary practice when divergent lexica are mobilised, which we encountered earlier through Roland Barthes. The notion of interdisciplinary practice as a network or tissue of relations will be explored in greater depth during chapter five. This chapter will explore relational aesthetics, particularly in terms of the openness of practice based outcomes in a gallery setting. The retying of the Gordian knot undertaken by Latour and his colleagues alerts us to the need for the interdisciplinary practitioner to go between disciplines rather than to use one discipline to critique another. Interdisciplinary practice is, in this regard, the site of a dialogue between practices.

VI Natural Icons in Dispute

Finally, during the remainder of this chapter I will investigate the implications of Latour's understanding of nature in terms of the

[150] Ibid. p.3

photograph as natural icon. As far as Latour is concerned, nature has not provided mankind with the political order that was expected (i.e. the natural hierarchy or order of things). He contends that we find ourselves outside of nature, indeed nature is inside of culture in the form of glasshouses, the Biosphere 2 project in Arizona, the Eden project, National Parks and even landscapes: nature as representation is inside of culture, it is artificial. Nature is a "composite collection"[151], a representation of our relationship with non-humans. According to Latour, the definition of nature depends upon position, vocabulary and ideology, it is contested. Therefore, to be close to nature, in a Latourean sense, is to be at the heart of conflict regarding what constitutes the natural. For Latour, the universalising, totalising category 'nature' cannot be claimed to be completely separate from society. Nature does not provide a fixed ground against which culture is offset, particularised as nature's Other. The discipline of ecology has no privileged connection or interaction with nature. Ecology does not *know* nature, transparently, as it were, but relies upon the mediations of the discipline of Science:

> this nature becomes knowable through the intermediary of the sciences; it has been formed through networks of instruments; it is defined through the interventions of professions, disciplines, and protocols; it is distributed via databases; it is provided with arguments through the intermediary of learned societies.[152]

The instrumentality of the sciences mediates nature, that is, we know about nature *via* the apparatus of science. The interventions of scientists,

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[151] Bruno Latour third lecture in the Nature Space Society series at Tate Modern 2004 webcast at www.tatemodern.org.uk/onlineevents/webcasts/nature_space_society/bruno_latour/default.jsp accessed 01.07.2008

[152] Bruno Latour *We Have Never Been Modern* Catherine Porter (trans), Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993 p. 4

the network of bodies of knowledge are practices which construct contradictory ideas of nature. We come to know nature through science, and as Latour argues, by making the apparatuses which make nature known to us visible, we will begin to understand the need to make the sciences democratic.

However, Latour posits that the ramifications of the crisis of objectivity are seen most clearly in the need for new kinds of objects. The 'old objects' are well defined, with clear boundaries, these were conceived and produced by researchers, engineers, entrepreneurs, who immediately became invisible once the objects were completed and marketed. Latour states that these old, essential objects must give way to new, complex objects which

> take on the aspect of tangled beings, forming rhizomes and networks…their producers are no longer invisible, out of sight; they appear in broad daylight, embarrassed, controversial, complicated, implicated, with all their instruments, laboratories, workshops and factories. Scientific, technological, and industrial production has been an integral part of their definition from the beginning.[153]

The crisis of the objectivity of political ecology demonstrates the need to move from old objects as 'matters of fact' to new objects, tangled, and complex with their method of production externally demonstrated, informing the framework for their reception and comprehension. The scientist, producer, engineer, institution are all thrown into the spotlight, made visible as an integral part of the complex that is the object. These new objects are, for Latour, not indisputable, like matters of fact, but rather disputable and controversial, they are 'matters of concern.' These

[153] Ibid. p.24

matters of concern wear their method of production on the outside, visible, implicated and problematic.

The Latourean 'matter of concern' is relevant to our argument at hand insofar as what currently concerns us is the putative transparency of photography, the notion that through the photograph we have unmediated contact with the real. Just as ecology does not have privileged access to nature, that is to say, we only know nature indirectly through ecology, the photograph does not necessarily put us in contact with the world as it truly is. As we shall see in due course, the Latourean 'matter of concern' resonates strongly with a model of photography which posits that the photograph is an image in which its maker and its apparatus are heavily implicated. The photograph, thought as technical image whose means of production is not invisible but evident in its making calls the Barthesean natural icon into dispute.

In what remains of this chapter I will now consider how we might begin to conceive photography in terms of Latour and Flusser's ideas. If we are to move away from the photograph as natural icon, how do we begin to define photographic images? As I shall demonstrate shortly, Flusser provides us with a way in to thinking photographs as encoded inscriptions: photographic images as texts of the world. As Barthes would have it, the syntagm of photographic images is *natural*: photographs are analogue copies of the world. The denotative or natural sign points to the world 'out there' and in its transparent state the photograph is not aesthetically significant, nor is it communicative (aside from anthropological detail). The photograph is proof of existence and, significantly for Barthes, it reminds us of the future death of the living subject who is immortalised in the photograph. The natural image *refers* to external, indisputable

entities, indeed the photograph as natural icon is a way of evidencing their indisputability. Flusser's invocation of the technical image as the product of apparatuses which signify concepts means that photographs cannot be considered in Barthesean terms, as natural signs, but in fact are opaque images which signify both their subject and their method of production.

The Latourean differentiation between 'matters of fact' and 'matters of concern' can be used in the service of the argument at hand in order to rethink photography in terms of its method of production. Rather than the mechanism of photography, with its optics, chemistry, industrial manufacture (etc) being *invisible*, photography gives us a kind of *synthetic* realism, a codification of the real. The interventions of the medium codify reality: photographs are coded messages, inscriptions of the world. The photographic object undermines the dichotomy between subject and object, because the world photographed is the world inside the camera. The photograph is the end of photography; an instrumental complex which, Latour might have argued, brings major companies, normalising politics of vision and representation, science, innovation and consumerism into play. Thinking photography in terms of the Latourean 'matter of concern', which productively places photography at the site of controversy and dispute, has its merits. This has clear resonances with Roland Barthes' intentions in 'Myth Today' and this strategy of placing photography within a contested intellectual space is precisely what Vilém Flusser does in *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*.

For Flusser, photography is a vast industry which informs the images made by the medium, the camera is a tool used by the photographer. However, it is not a tool which is under the complete control of its

operator, nor, as we have already discussed, is it simply a machine for seeing. The tool, once conceived of as a simulation of bodily organs, and thus an extension of the body has been transformed into something more technical, that is, the technical tool embodies theory.

> Tools in the usual sense are extensions of human organs: extended teeth, fingers, hands, arms, legs…They simulate the organ they are extended from…They are 'empirical.' With the Industrial Revolution, however, tools were no longer limited to empirical situations; they grasped hold of scientific theories: They became 'technical.'[154]

Although the apparatus is a product of industrialisation, Flusser argues that the essence of understanding apparatuses is that their development and impact continues into the post-industrial. Apparatuses have become more involved with information rather than products of the industrial category *work*.[155] In order to fully understand the apparatus, Flusser argues, it must be reconsidered in the context of post-industrial production: apparatuses do not change the world through work, they change its meaning.

> Their [apparatuses] intention is not to change the world but to change the meaning of the world. Their intention is symbolic. Photographers do not work in the industrial sense…but they do something: They create, process and store symbols.[156]

He goes on to write

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[154] Vilém Flusser *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* Anthony Mathews (trans) London: Reaktion Books, 2006 p. 23
[155] Ibid p. 25
[156] Ibid

> [The photographer's] interest is concentrated on the camera; for them, the world is purely a pretext for the realization of camera possibilities. In short: They are not working, they do not want to change the world, but they are in search of information.[157]

The photographer, states Flusser, is not engaged in work whilst making these informative images, rather the camera is the photographer's plaything: the photographer is a player: "not *Homo faber* but *Homo ludens*."[158] The apparatus of the camera can be controlled and fed by the photographer, but (as functionary[159]) he/she is in turn controlled by the mystery of its interior. The blindness of the photographic moment, coupled with the enigma of the dark chamber of the camera, propels the photographic functionary to play the game in the continued search for information.

Flusser argues that the "black box"[160] of the apparatus of photographic production requires to be made visible in order for us to be able to productively criticise photographs and to avoid this illiteracy of technical imagery. Flusser writes:

> The encoding of technical images, however, is what is going on in the interior of this black box and consequently any criticism of technical images must be aimed at an elucidation of its inner workings. As long as there is no way of engaging in such criticism of technical images, we shall remain illiterate.[161]

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[157] Ibid. pp 26-27
[158] Ibid. p. 27
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid. p.16

This need to make the apparatus of photographic production visible, the "elucidation of its inner workings"[162] is a striking parallel of what Latour writes about in *The Politics of Nature*. As we discovered previously, Latour argues that new objects are not clearly defined. On the contrary, their complex method of production needs to be a part of their definition. The new object as a Latourean matter of concern can be extended to articulate the photograph as the product of the black box that is the apparatus of photography. I wrote earlier of the photographer's blind spot, the moment when the shutter opens, the photographer is excluded from the photographic moment. At the point of register between light and light sensitive surface, the photographer has no visual contact with the scene through the camera. This exclusion, the very darkness of the box, piques the interest of the photographer:

> It is precisely the obscurity of the box which motivates photographers to take photographs. They lose themselves, it is true, inside the camera in search of possibilities, but they can nevertheless control the box. For they know how to feed the camera (they know the input of the box), and likewise they know how to get it to spit out photographs (they know the output of the box). Therefore the camera does what the photographer wants it to do, even though the photographer does not know what is going on inside the camera. This is precisely what is characteristic of the functioning of apparatuses: The functionary controls the apparatus thanks to the control of its exterior (the input and the output) and is controlled by it thanks to the impenetrability of its interior.[163]

[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid. pp. 27-28

Flusser goes on to state that the lack of competence of the functionary to play the game turns the whole process into a Kafkaesque world. By this Flusser means a world in which the photographer strives for freedom but it eternally eludes him due to the strictures of the photographic programme. The privacy of the image making apparatus, the *in camera* of the camera, amounts, as we have seen, to the exclusion of the photographer. In Flusser's account the photographer is a functionary of the apparatus, controlled by the technology as much as he/she is in control of it. The photography game which Flusser talks about, seeks to exhaust the possibilities of the photographic programme in order to enrich the photographic universe. However, for Flusser, only informative pictures are legitimate images in this process, therefore the non-informative image, or snapshot, falls out with the scope of Flusser's analysis. For him, the photographic programme is the totality of all possible informative photographs. This is problematic insofar as an exact definition of what constitutes an informative image is missing from Flusser's account. In addition, there is no real indication why the snapshot is not informative, other than that it is a repetition of previous snapshots. From this I take Flusser to mean that informative images are photographically innovative, and photographic innovation, it would seem, is finite. The finitude of the photographic programme suggests that the functionaries may indeed be able to exhaust it, but, Flusser argues, the programme is rich, otherwise the game would be over too soon. Therefore the functionaries are unlikely to deplete the programme, although their efforts will enrich the photographic universe, provided that is, their images are informative.

According to Flusser, illiteracy in the face of technical images is only to be counteracted by the illumination of the dark workings of the camera, and the scientific, optical, industrial process/complex that is photography. Like

Bruno Latour's 'matter of concern' with its scientists, researchers and entrepreneurs, embarrassed and visible, implicated in that which has just been produced, in a sense, the photographic complex, as image + photographic workings (apparatus and chemistry) should function as a Latourean matter of concern, rather than a matter of fact. Only then, if we are to heed Flusser, can we overcome photographic illiteracy and move towards a philosophy of photography.

Flusser defines the photographer as a 'functionary' because he/she has crept inside the box in order to try to illuminate the workings of its interior.[164] The photographer is therefore very much embroiled in the photographic process. So, although photographs are treated as "symptoms of the world"[165] they are in fact metacodes of texts. Rather than pointing to the world, the photograph codifies it and the reader of the photograph employs imagination which Flusser states "involves the ability to transcode concepts from texts into images"[166]. He writes that when we look at photographic images "we see concepts – encoded in a new way – of the world out there."[167]

The photographer, as functionary, uses the photographic apparatus to collect and store information and symbols which are newly encoded concepts of the world and the resulting technical images are imaginatively read by the viewer. All informative photographs are simply the actualised possibilities of the photographic programme which the photographer has captured and stored whilst playing against the apparatus. Crucially for Flusser, traditional and technical images differ

[164] Ibid. p.27
[165] Ibid. p.15
[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid.

because they employ a different kind of magic: pre-historic and post-historic magic respectively.

> Prehistoric magic is a ritualization of models known as 'myths'; current magic is a ritualization of models known as 'programs'. Myths are models that are communicated orally and whose author – a 'god' – is beyond the communication process. Programs, on the other hand, are models that are communicated in writing and whose authors – 'functionaries' – are within the communication process[168]

The functionary is inside of the photographic programme, which is a process of written communication. The photographer, blind to the inner workings of his/her apparatus tries to decipher the camera's inner magic from inside the apparatus, and indeed, the photographic programme. Thus, according to Flusser, the photographer becomes part of the function of the camera: the photographer is, to use a Latourean term, an *imbroglio* of the scientific, industrial, post-industrial photographic programme. Photography is a form of writing and the photograph is a metacode which signifies the advanced texts which facilitated its production: it is the text of a text.

Flusser's *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* seeks to provoke a philosophy of photography which finds freedom for the photographer within the constraints of an apparatus driven practice. He writes:

> A philosophy of photography is necessary for raising photographic practice to the level of consciousness…because this practice gives rise to a model of freedom in the post-industrial context in general.[169]

[168] Ibid. p.17
[169] Ibid. p.81

Both Latour and Flusser provide arguments which demonstrate that we should be sceptical of claims that the photograph transparently presences the subject. The photograph as an inscription of the photographic programme renders it opaque: it is codified. Like a kind of language, photographs represent the world inscribed by photographic means. The photograph does not presence the world-in-itself, we cannot know the world transparently through the photograph, looking at photographs we can only know the world photographed, just as we can only know the world phenomenally through our senses. What the photograph brings to the viewer's experience is an image, a new photographic horizon, a *synthetic* reality. In a sense I agree with Barthes that a critical feature of photography is its capacity to bring the world into the horizon of the spectator. However, where I think the fundamental difference between us lies is that it is not *the* world, but *a* world, which is brought to our attention; a world photographically inscribed.

VII Concluding remarks

I began this chapter with an investigation into Roland Barthes' writing on photography, in order to demonstrate that the natural syntagm of the photograph and its capacity to bring the body of its subject to presence, are two critical points in understanding the photograph in Barthesean terms. Although Barthes makes a distinction between intentional and non-intentional images, there are commonalities in his writings on photography through which we can trace the tropes of the *natural* and *presence*. This leads him to account for Photography's *noeme* in terms of

a quasi-theological presence, a divine imprint: the photograph as a resurrection of the subject.

The notion that photography is pseudo-natural was explored in Barthes' analysis of intentional images in chapter one, where we looked at his writings on Myth. It is my contention that in our commerce with photographs we treat them largely *as though* they are natural. However, the photograph is produced by a vast industrial complex in which, if we take Flusser at his word and we are not alive to this fact, we are but players.

Through an investigation of Vilèm Flusser and Bruno Latour, writing respectively on photography and political ecology, we began to unpack the idea 'nature' in order to illustrate the problem of nature considered as total and separate to ourselves. Latour's conception of the new object, imbricated within its network of producers and receivers, a 'matter of concern' rather than a 'matter of fact' was explored in parallel with Flusser's ideas regarding the instrumentality of photography. Just as we are unable to know the world in itself, science produces truths and photography produces realism, it inscribes the world in its own terms. A photograph is not a truthful, natural image but a synthetic encoding of reality. The photographic apparatus is another way of making the world speak.

Although the idea that the Barthesean Photograph is an emanation of its subject has already been discussed, there is more to be explored, especially in terms of the photograph as a motif of what Jacques Derrida describes as the metaphysics of presence. The play of absence and presence, of birth and death, mortality and the inevitable human desire

to immortalise the 'loved body' in the mausoleum of the photograph is an emotive rendering of the ongoing theme of presence in philosophical writing. It is my intention to explore this in greater detail during the next chapter. In contradistinction to Barthes, Flusser has enabled us to begin a discussion of photographs as the product of a practice which signifies concepts. This is to say, photography is a form of writing. It will be towards this idea of photography as writing, through recourse to the work of Jacques Derrida, which I will turn in the following chapter. I intend to return to Barthes and Saussure and introduce the writing of Jacques Derrida alongside a key text on Surrealist photography by Rosalind Krauss. This is undertaken with a view to exploring the notion that photography is a means of writing the world.

Chapter 3

Writing the world

I The Photograph that Breathes

II Grammatology

III The Double, the Frame and the Space Between

IV Cleaving the Laminated Object

V Photographs as *physis in différance*

VI Concluding remarks

I The Photograph that Breathes

In order to develop our central thesis that the photograph is text, the next step in our argument will be to propose the idea that photography writes the world. I contend that photographs are inscriptions of their subject, rather than, as Roland Barthes would have it, emanations of a past reality. Like the text, the photograph is opaque, which contradicts the realists' understanding that photographic images touch us "like the delayed rays of a star"[170]. I will argue that photographs belong to the economy of signification and that they can be understood, in terms of poststructuralist theory, as being written: they are texts. This argument contests a number of assumptions about photography, such as, photographic representation, which we shall see in due course, is undermined by Derridean textuality. In addition, if photographs are texts, the photographer's role should be reconfigured as a writer, rather than observer and copier of the world. Instead of engaging in the semiotics of the photograph, which is an area that has been widely covered by published texts, during this chapter I shall focus on the idea that photographic practice can be configured as Derridean *écriture*. I intend to return to Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida* in order to investigate and consider the duality in his writing on the text and the photograph, which amounts to a *manichaeism* that regards the ontology of texts and photographs as quite distinct. This duality opens up some interesting ideas with respect to presence, which I believe offers a way in to a discussion of the photograph as a sign which is permanently deferred. I intend to explore the resources of the sign from a Derridean perspective which will entail that the photographic sign is placed 'under erasure' and

[170] Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* Richard Howard (trans), London: Vintage, 2000 p.81

photographic practice can begin to be considered in terms of the expanded field of writing: *grammatology*.

Firstly, I will revisit the Winter Garden photograph, in order to explore it with respect to what Barthes describes as its supererogatory nature and begin to consider the impact of this ethical supplementation in the context of thinking and practising photography. It is my contention that the photographic supplement gives rise to a paradox in Barthes' argumentation with regard to the immediacy of the image and the alleged subjectivity of the *punctum*. Therefore, I intend to question Barthes' assertion that photographs cannot be signs. Indeed, Rosalind Krauss writes about photographic images in terms of their indexical nature and yet, as she demonstrates in 'The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism,' this does not entail a complete rejection of the capacity of photographic images to signify. I propose that the presence of Barthes' mother in the Winter Garden photograph is deferred in virtue of the delay of the photographic sign: Barthes' mother is part of the writing of the world. As Derrida writes

> What defers presence…is the very basis on which presence is announced or desired in what represents it, its sign, its trace[171]

If Derrida is right, the photograph, through which Barthes desires the presence of his mother, simultaneously announces and defers her presence due to the permanent delay or deferral of the sign, which is an idea that we will return to in due course. The photograph is a sign of difference, which I will demonstrate later, is the *différance* of the world. However, before I go on to think about photographs in this way, I will

[171] Jacques Derrida *Positions* Alan Bass (trans), New York; London: Continuum, 2004 p.7

explore the idea that the Barthesean photograph can be thought of as a motif or indeed symptom of what Derrida describes as the metaphysics of presence. That is to say, Barthes' notion that the photograph brings the subject to presence is comparable to the latencies of presence in the thought of Plato, Rousseau and Saussure which are revealed by Derrida's deconstructive reading. Logocentrism, argues Derrida, privileges speech over writing, presence over the indicative detour. These assumptions have parallels in photography considered in terms of an emanation of the subject: the subject is self identical in the photograph which, I argue, amounts to photography's own metaphysics of presence. However, if we think of the photograph in terms of writing, it is sameness in difference rather than the self-identical presencing of the subject which is the key. As we saw in the previous chapter, Bathes' argument regarding the transparency of photographic images in *Camera Lucida* amounts to a denial of the material and instrumentation of photography, a blind spot in Barthes' thought which bears remarkable similarities to the logical inconsistencies in Ferdinand de Saussure's semiology which are made plain by Derrida's deconstructive reading in *Of Grammatology*.[172]

In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes asserts that the Winter Garden image is a "supererogatory photograph which contained more than what the technical being of photography can reasonably offer"[173]. That is to say, there is something supplementary provided by the unknown photographer which rendered the essence of the loved body (Barthes' mother) photographically. The photographer somehow pushes the medium to surpass its technical limits, facilitating the mediation of a *truth*. Thanks to the photographer, the photographic medium responds beyond

[172] Jacques Derrida *Of Grammatology* Corrected Edition Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (trans), Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997 pp.27-73
[173] Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* Richard Howard (trans), London: Vintage, 2000 p.70

the call of duty: this particular photograph is special. In it, the subject is manifested, the being of the photograph *is* the subject. The presence of Barthes' mother emanates from the photograph: she is *there* shining weakly through the photograph, touching him with the light reflected from her, what he calls her "treasury of rays."[174] For Barthes, the photograph of his mother absolutely resists the status of sign, the laminated referent is only truly present for Barthes, and as we have already seen, for any other viewer this photograph would represent pure *studium*. Barthes' mother is brought to presence by the photograph and this serves to make her absence in life all the more poignant. Somewhat ineffably, the Winter Garden photographer managed to bring something additional to bear, a *supplement*, which spoke to Barthes, alone.

As we saw in the previous chapter, not all of the photographs which Barthes encountered on that November evening presented his mother. The manifestation of the subject in the photograph is reliant upon "that exorbitant thing"[175], the air which accompanies the subject. The air articulates the self-presence of the subject, therefore the true likeness, the true presence of the subject requires a supplement for its articulation. The Winter Garden Photograph had a kind of *aura*, and whilst Barthes does not ever use this word, he describes the "sudden awakening"[176] when he sees his mother in the photograph, as the "air"[177]. This air is the supererogatory aspect of the photograph, the supplement which the photographer is responsible for capturing. The air animates the essence of the human subject and it is this which distinguishes those partially false

[174] Ibid. p.82
[175] Ibid. p109
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid. p.107

images from The Photograph. The air is the *auric* breath of the true photograph:

> Thus the air is the luminous shadow which accompanies the body; and if the photograph fails to show this air, then the body moves without a shadow, and once this shadow is severed…there remains no more than a sterile body. It is by this tenuous umbilical cord that the photographer gives life; if he cannot, either by lack of talent or bad luck, supply the transparent soul its bright shadow, the subject dies forever.[178]

As far as Barthes is concerned, the threads which tie the referent to its image must not be cut. Images which preserve the *auric* breath of the subject, i.e. those which enable the subject to live on in the photograph, are animated by the umbilical chord connecting the subject and the photographer. The once living subject in the photograph cannot be thought as an exterior image, a representation of its subject, it is, as we discovered in the previous chapter, a presentation. In fact, for Barthes, in good photographs the subject (thanks to the air) really is alive. The *punctum*, the subjective element which addresses the spectator also activates the blind field, which is the spacetime outside of the photograph. However, for a photograph without the life giving umbilical chord all that remains is a "sterile body"[179], dead, pinned within the frame of the photographic image.

In spite of his interest in the activation of the blind field, that is, life outside of the frame, Barthes does not discuss the actual frame of the Winter Garden Photograph. He does not disclose whether the picture had a

[178] Ibid. p.110
[179] Ibid.

white border whose edges may have been crimped in the manner of many old family photographs. Although a photograph is framed or cropped, the articulation of the blind field points to the life of the subject outside of the image: a continuity between image and world. According to Barthes, the truth of the Winter Garden image causes the frame to drop away, presenting Barthes with his mother and her life prior to and beyond his experience of her. As we have seen, if the *punctum* or the *air* are not present, the subject dies: it is no more that a brittle body encased in a vitrine: it is lifeless; *studium*. The blind field suppresses the frame and the hermetic seal of the photograph is broken, which enables the subject to breathe.

> Now confronting millions of photographs, including those which have a good *studium*, I sense no blind field: everything which happens in the frame dies absolutely once this frame is passed beyond. When we define the Photograph as a motionless image, this does not mean only that the figures it represents do not move; it means that they do not *emerge*, do not *leave*: they are anaesthetized and fastened down, like butterflies. Yet once there is a *punctum*, a blind field is created (is divined): on account of her necklace, the black woman in her Sunday best has had, for me, a whole life external to her portrait; Robert Wilson, endowed with an unlocatable *punctum*, is someone I want to meet.[180]

This *unlocatable punctum* exceeds articulation; it is *inter-subjective*: the subject in the Barthesean photograph speaks directly to the spectator, it does not require an intermediary. Particular details in the image prick the Spectator, the photograph is the foretelling of a future death. But, as previously discussed, the *punctum* is both inseparable from the

[180] Ibid. p.57

photograph and an addition, a supplement which is disclosed by the lucky, or talented, photographer. It is this supplement which addresses itself directly to the Spectator.

However, this leads to a peculiar tension in *Camera Lucida* between the notion of the photograph as an emanation and Barthes' idea that the photographer is engaged in the revelation of a truth. Barthes seems to want the photograph to be both *immediate* and yet *mediated*. Indeed, the Winter Garden Photograph is the only image of his mother which truly reveals her. As much as Barthes claims to be looking for the genius of photography, that is, what is special about photographs in general, his theory of photography is structured to account for just one image: the photograph (unseen by the reader) of his mother aged 5. Its absence in print, as I will demonstrate later, is as much a claim for the private experience of photographs, as a critical tactic which Barthes uses in order to convey his personal beliefs about photographic images.

The notion that the Winter Garden photograph is the image of a death foretold, demonstrates Barthes' desire for the photograph to oscillate between absence and presence, underwriting his understanding of the medium, and thus his final book, with an indescribable melancholy. Barthes' play of absence and presence, of birth and death, and the inevitable human desire to immortalise the loved body in the mausoleum of the photograph, is an emotive rendering of the theme of presence in philosophical writing. The photograph is a testament to the (previous) existence of the subject:

> Photography never lies: or rather, it can lie as to the meaning of the thing, being by nature *tendentious*, never as to its existence…Every photograph is a certificate of presence.[181]

Insofar as the photograph testifies to the existence of the subject, and thus ratifies the subjecthood of the Spectator, the photograph expresses being as presence, even in death. Just as the photograph is a certificate of presence, ironically it is also a certificate of death. However, it is the *punctum* which annunciates the presence of the subject: the *punctum* or stigma, evokes resurrection, the subject is resurrected in the photograph. The subject in the photograph articulated by the *punctum* is temporally present ("temporal presence as point [*stigmè*] of the now"[182]).

II Grammatology

Barthes' pursuit of a realist ontology of photography means that, as we have seen, he simply cannot advocate the photograph as sign. This leads him to dematerialise the photograph, which enables the referent to persist. As we touched on earlier, somewhat strangely, it is Derrida's elucidation of the failings of Ferdinand de Saussurre's account of signification which helps us to express the problematic of Barthes' photographic realism.

Barthes' disavowal of the photographic material, his blindness to the instrumentality of photographs, and his privileging of the presence of the subject, amounts to a reduction of the exteriority of the photographic signifier. As we saw in Chapter 1, Ferdinand de Saussure argues that

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[181] Ibid. p.87
[182] Jacques Derrida *Of Grammatology* Corrected Edition Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (trans), Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997 p.12

language is not material, rather it is a system which is held collectively in the minds of its users. Whereas the materiality of language is thoroughly challenged in Saussure's account of meaning, in Barthes' thesis on photography the materiality of the photograph is also denied: the photographic image does not exist; only the referent does. Therefore the photographic image is not constituted by the granularity of its materials. Not only is Barthes blind to the instrumentality of the camera, he cannot see the grain of the photograph. Indeed, Louis-Jean Calvet writes in his biography of Barthes that when discussing the work of a number of painters, such as Cy Twombly, Barthes tended to focus on the image rather than the material it was constituted by (i.e. paint):

> when he discusses a painter's work, he never refers to the material, the texture of the paint, its thickness. He always confines himself to images. In fact, he could just as well have used two dimensional reproductions for the purposes of his analyses.[183]

Just as Barthes appears to pay no heed to the physical structure of a painting, he treats the being of the photograph as if it were transparent, the *weightless envelope* which would float away were it not for the referent holding it down. For Barthes, the photograph is not a sign because, as we saw in the previous chapter, the photographic signifier simply does not exist. There is no body to the Barthesean photograph, only the loved body, the referent laminated in the photograph. This notion that the photograph is laminated to the referent, that the photograph is self-identical to its subject, has peculiar resonances with Saussure's theorisation of the unified sign, in which the signifier becomes strangely transparent to the signified. The Saussurean sign, preoccupied

[183] Louis-Jean Calvet *Roland Barthes: A Biography* Sarah Wykes (trans) Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994 p.195

with the proximity of language to speech (the touch or imprint of language on the mind which enables self-presence in understanding i.e. in hearing one's self speak) parallels the proximity of the subject in the ideal Barthesean photograph, present to the Spectator through the touch of the photographic emanation. The exteriority of the photographic signifier is repressed by Barthes in order for him to write his realist ontology of photography. The conception of the photograph as an opaque representation is suppressed, thus enabling Barthes to be psychologically moved by the emanation of his mother: Sausurre's psychic account of language opens on to Barthes' emotional and emotive reading of photography.

In contradistinction to the self-presence of the subject in the ideal Barthesean photograph, this thesis argues that the photograph is text. Therefore, the subject in the photograph is non-essential: the subject in the photograph is the subject *in difference*. As we saw earlier, Barthes himself concedes this point when he argues that many of the photographs of his mother were "partially true, and therefore totally false."[184] The supererogatory photograph itself relies on a supplement, something extrinsic to the subject, to bring the subject to full presence. This bears a similarity to the Kantian *parergon* which Derrida critiques in *The Truth in Painting*. We will explore this more fully during the next chapter, but for the time being suffice it to say, the subject, brought to presence in the ideal Barthesean photograph requires a supplement in order for it to be made manifest. On the other hand, if we think of the photographed subject as the difference of itself, this enables us to understand the photograph as part of a general system of difference: writing rather than being, or photographic being as writing.

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[184] Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* Richard Howard (trans), London: Vintage, 2000 p.66

In order to explicate the parallel between Barthes and Saussure a little more clearly, let us now look at Jacques Derrida who represents Saussurre's position on the unity of the sign as follows:

> When I speak, not only am I conscious of being present for what I think, but I am conscious also of keeping as close as possible to my thought, or to the "concept," a signifier that does not fall into the world, a signifier that I hear as soon as I emit it, that seems to depend upon my pure and free spontaneity, requiring the use of no instrument, no accessory, no force taken from the world. Not only do the signifier and the signified seem to unite, but also, in this confusion, the signifier seems to erase itself or to become transparent, in order to allow the concept to present itself as what it is, referring to nothing other than its presence. The exteriority of the signifier seems reduced.[185]

Thus, according to Derrida, the Saussurean sign *naturally* unites thought and speech, enabling the concept to be presented, made present as the utterance of a free subject, who in hearing himself utter, understands. That is to say, at the moment of speaking, speech is transparent to thought; thought is present *in* speech. This position, which has dominated Western metaphysics since antiquity, is dubbed by Derrida as the *metaphysics of presence* and is one of the fixed centres in philosophical thought which he seeks to deconstruct. Indeed, if we are to think of the photograph as a motif of the metaphysics of presence, that is, to throw the denial of the exteriority of the photographic signifier into the spotlight, there are a number of contradictions in the logic of the Saussurean sign which it would now be pertinent to investigate. For example, as we see from the

[185] Jacques Derrida *Positions* Alan Bass (trans), New York; London: Continuum, 2004 pp. 20-21

above quote, Derrida is critical of the seemingly magical self-erasure of the signifier, which facilitates the transparency between the signifier and the signified.

It is important to remind ourselves that Saussure's theory of semiology was concerned with language, as an immaterial system which was held in the minds of its users, rather than its phonic or graphic material. This results in Saussure treating writing as a separate system to language, which although is necessary as a representation of language, he argues its very supplementarity is dangerous:

> Writing, though unrelated to its inner system, is used continually to represent language. We cannot simply disregard it. We must be acquainted with its usefulness, shortcomings, and dangers.[186]

Thus Saussure posits that language has an internal system represented by writing which is external to it. Jacques Derrida reiterates Saussure's position with the following words: "Writing, sensible matter and artificial exteriority: a 'clothing' ".[187] In seeking to invert the age old philosophical privilege of speech over writing, Derrida expands the field of writing beyond the physicality of the inscriptive mark (graph). Although Sausurre's system of signification would appear to have difference at its core, Derrida argues that because the phonè holds a central position in Saussure's semiology, his account is *logocentric*, that is, reliant upon the metaphysics of presence. Thus Saussurean semiology has a paradox at its centre: the sign is arbitrary, yet reliant upon a natural associative bond between sound and sense. Although the sign is premised upon difference

[186] Saussure cited by Derrida in *Of Grammatology* Corrected Edition Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (trans), Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997 p.34
[187] Jacques Derrida *Of Grammatology* Corrected Edition Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (trans), Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997 p.35

as the productive capacity of language as meaning maker, Saussure's privileging of the presence of speech as critical to understanding is a core principle.

Derrida argues that the paradox in Sausurre's thought is driven by the prejudicial desire to exclude writing from the proper domain of the discourse on language. The paradox in Saussure's account begs the question whether or not the sign is indeed radically arbitrary after all. Writing as the exteriority of language is unrelated to the inner system (language *per se*) which implies a naturalism and transparency within the interior of language.[188] Saussure's semiology reiterates the binarism of inside/outside and the notion that meaning is premised upon the self presence of the speaker, yet at the same time he insists that the sign is arbitrary. This paradox in Saussurean thought leads Derrida to argue that the interiority of language (represented) and exteriority of writing (representation) become ensnared in one another. Indeed Derrida argues that in Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* the *graph* and the *phonè* are entwined to the extent that it is not clear where the boundary between that which is represented and representation itself falls.

> Representation mingles with what it represents, to the point where one speaks as one writes, one thinks as if the represented were nothing more than the shadow or reflection of the representer…In this play of representation the point of origin becomes ungraspable. There are things like reflecting pools, and images, an infinite reference from one to the other, but no longer a source, a spring. There is no longer a simple origin. For what is reflected is split *in itself* and not only as an addition to itself of its image. The reflection, the image, the double, splits what it doubles. The origin of the speculation becomes a

[188] Yet Saussure refers to the sound impression as the '*sound-image*'.

> difference. What can look at itself is not one; and the law of the addition of the origin to its representation, of the thing to its image, is that one plus one makes at least three.[189]

The relation between phonic language and writing is thus inverted and Derrida argues that speech becomes the 'speculum' of writing: speech is the mirror, the representation, of writing. The notion of the supplementary nature of writing is overturned and speech is redefined as the image, or double, of writing.

Derrida's argument regarding the intermingling of representation and represented resonates strongly with our conception of photography as text. The photographic 'mirror' sets off a play of reference between the subject and its image, this reflection, as Derrida writes, "splits what it doubles".[190] Not only does the photographic image add to or double the subject, the reflected subject is "split in itself".[191] That is to say, the subject having been reflected or represented photographically can no longer be considered to be a simple origin but difference. *The origin of the photographic speculation becomes a difference*. As we shall see in due course, for Rosalind Krauss this notion of the photographic double articulates *écriture*. Indeed, the subject is differed virtually *ad infinitum* as the photographic negative facilitates successive duplications each one the difference of the next. Thus photographic reproducibility becomes the reflecting pool of the subject in dissemination.

Derrida seeks to undermine the philosophical position that thought is present to speech, that language is, by definition, presence, and writing,

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[189] Ibid. p.36
[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid.

in virtue of its representative function, absence: writing re-presents the absent presence (the speaker). The recognition of the self-present and unified speaking subject, which occupies a concrete (neutral) and empirically navigable reality, is in fact a *mis*-recognition. Thought is partial, fragmentary and individuation is an illusion. He argues that writing

> no longer designat[es] the exterior surface, the insubstantial double of a major signifier, *the signifier of the signifier*…Not that the word "writing" has ceased to designate the signifier of the signifier, but it appears, strange as it may seem, that "signifier of the signifier" no longer defines accidental doubling and fallen secondarity. "Signifier of the signifier" describes on the contrary the movement of language[192]

Thus for Derrida, writing continues to function as the signifier of the signifier but rather than this designating the supplementary, exterior relation between writing and speech, writing as the signifier of the signifier describes language in movement: the ceaseless play of signification. This subtle shift in the concept of writing elucidated by Derrida, entails that the signifier of the signifier ceases to denote the representative relation, and begins to mark the deferral of meaning through the constant movement of language. Writing is therefore a field of signifiers, each referring to another signifier rather than closing on a signified. Thus Derrida's notion of the origin of writing is a structure which "conceals and erases itself in its own production. There the signified always already functions as a signifier."[193] Thus the field is unstable and therefore unknowable.

[192] Ibid.p.7
[193] Ibid.

The exclusion of the graphic mark from the interiority of language resonates with Barthes' desire for the self-identical presence of his mother in the ideal photograph. However, it is ironic that Barthes' thesis on the photographic touch relies upon a supplement. The dematerialisation of the photograph facilitates the proximity of the spectator and the referent: the photographic touch. As we saw in the previous chapter, this is problematic enough in itself. However, additionally, in order to account for the significance of that special photograph, Barthes himself invokes the notion of supplementarity; the photograph's supererogatory nature. This enables Barthes to differentiate between *studium* and *punctum*, to allow photographs to have divergent meanings for different spectators in tandem with arguing in favour of the immortalising capacity as the envelope which keeps his Mother alive. Thus the contradictory logic of supplementarity which runs through Saussure's writing on the proximity of thought and speech is also evident in Barthes' writing on the proximity of the subject and spectator.

As we discussed in a previous chapter, an instrumental reading of photography demands that we are not wilfully blind to the industry and physicality of the medium. The means of photographic images are significant, as previously explored, photographs give us a codified reality which we can begin to think in terms of writing. In order to challenge Barthes' account of photography which places such an emphasis on the importance of the presence of the referent, namely the referentiality of photography, we can turn to Derrida's deconstructive reading of the unity of the Saussurean sign in order to find a way of understanding photography in terms of *écriture*. The full significance of this expansive term will be investigated throughout the remainder of this thesis. However, it should be noted that *écriture* is not used simply as a metaphor for

photography, but as a radical means of thinking photography that opens the way to understanding it in terms of *photogrammatology*. I therefore now intend to briefly introduce Derrida's deconstructive strategy in relation to Saussure's argument regarding the unity of the sign which will also function as a useful precursor to the following section that investigates the photographic lacuna, specifically in relation to the writing of Rosalind Krauss.

Derrida rigorously questions the Saussurean assumption that the sign *is* the unification of the signifier and the signified, that meaning *is* the unification of sound and sense. He argues, contrary to Saussure, that the sign cannot unify the signifier and the signified, that between them there is always a gap or a delay, the *caesura* or lacuna which is necessary for understanding:

> the order of the signified is never contemporary, is at best the subtly discrepant inverse or parallel – discrepant by the time of a breath – from the order of the signifier[194]

Thus between thought and speech, between concept and language there is a hiatus which makes understanding possible, yet frustrates the closure of meaning. The spacing of the sign is productive absence:

> spacing is the impossibility for an identity to be closed on itself, on the inside of its proper interiority, or on its coincidence with itself. The irreducibility of spacing is the irreducibility of the other…"spacing"

[194] Ibid. p.18

> designates not only interval, but a "productive," "genetic," "practical" movement, an "operation"[195]

The sign therefore cannot close on itself, it cannot be completely unified or self-contained but must always contain something other than itself. The sign, placed under erasure is both presence and absence, self and other, sameness and difference. The deconstructed or erased sign does not preserve the distinction between *langue* and *parole*, rather through this gesture Derrida undermines this difference in Saussure's semiology, pressing for the transformation of semiology to *grammatology*. As Gayatri Chakavorty Spivak puts it " "Writing"… is the name of the structure always already inhabited by the trace."[196] Writing as *grammatology* is the tool which enables the critique of semiology:

> The use of language or the employment of any code which implies a play of forms - with no determined or invariable substratum - also presupposes a retention and protention of differences, a spacing and temporalizing, a play of traces. This play must be a sort of inscription prior to writing, a protowriting without a present origin, without an arché. From this comes the systematic crossing-out of the arché and the transformation of general semiology into a grammatology, the latter performing a critical work upon everything within semiology - right down to its matrical concept of signs - that retains any metaphysical presuppositions incompatible with the theme of differance.[197]

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[195] Jacques Derrida *Positions* Alan Bass (trans), New York; London: Continuum, 2004 pp. 76-77

[196] Gayatri Chakavorty Spivak Translator's Preface to *Of Grammatology* Corrected Edition, Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997 p. xxxix

[197] Jacques Derrida 'Différance' in *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* David B. Allison (trans), Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973 p.146

By placing the ruling principle of Saussure's semiology (the sign) under erasure("the systematic crossing-out of the arché"[198]), semiology gives way to *grammatology*. Due to grammatology's status as protowriting without arché, that is, an inscription which allows the play of traces, or *différance*, it is able to function as a process which questions the metaphysical latencies of semiology. Language is thus used by Derrida to explore its own logocentric limits while at the same time opening spaces for reading between signifiers.

During chapter two we looked at Roland Barthes' argument regarding photography's incapacity to signify. According to him, the signifier and the signified will not join; they curdle like sour milk. However, as we have seen from Derrida's deconstructive reading of Saussure, the sign is permanently open: the signifier and the signified are never unified. This, as I hope to demonstrate in due course, not only opens the way for us to think about the photograph in terms of the sign in deferral, but it also enables a productive use of *grammatology* to be brought into play in conjunction with photography.

III The Photographic Double, the Frame and the Space Between

Taking her cue from Derrida, the theorist and critic Rosalind Krauss argues that the space between the signified and the signifier, which she describes as the "formal preconditions of the sign"[199] is a critical component of Surrealist photographic practice. Rather than striving to resolve the tensions inherent in a stylistic definition of Surrealism, in 'The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism' Krauss constructs an argument to

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[198] Ibid.
[199] Rosalind Krauss *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 1986 p.107

demonstrate that the practice of surrealist photographers defines Surrealism in a wider sense. The condition of Surrealism generally is for Krauss, photographic *per se*. Whilst surrealist photography is not a central concern of this thesis, the manner in which Krauss theorises both Dada photomontage and Surrealist photography has, I believe, a value which goes beyond the definition of these artistic movements. Her tactic of questioning photography's illusion of presence, which I will explore a little later, is significant in terms of my own resistance to the notion that the Winter Garden Photograph actually presences Barthes' mother. Also, Krauss' distinction between Dada photomontage as an interpretation of the real and surrealist photography's paradoxical practice of constituting reality as a sign i.e. nature as representation, or presence transformed into writing, has a broader resonance with my thesis of the landscape as text.

As we have seen, Derrida argues that the asynchronous nature of the signified and the signifier frustrates any possibility of unity in the sign. The ensuing gap generates the precondition of the sign, that is, the deferral of language, referred to by Derrida as *différance*, which simultaneously produces and denies meaning. In 'The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism', Krauss writes about this spacing in terms of the photograph's capacity to signify. She argues that photography's distinctive indexical relation to the world enabled the surrealists to subvert the real. According to Krauss, this tactic of subverting the photographic index functions as a form of *écriture*. So although Krauss argues that the photograph is indexically linked to its referent, in the instance of surrealist photography, this feature of the photographic is manipulated in order to question the reality of the real by proposing that reality is itself a representation. This, according to Krauss, "constitutes the notion of the Marvelous [*sic*] or of

Convulsive Beauty – the key concepts of surrealism."[200] And as far as Krauss is concerned, a crucial strategy for the surrealist photographer in the destabilisation of photographic reality is to drive a space between the image and that which it represents by way of doubling i.e. by the use of sandwiched negatives and double printing. The insertion of another space into the so-called seamless space of photographic realism is unsettling due to the appearance of the double, but it also has the effect of undermining the *reality* of the original:

> It is doubling that produces the formal rhythm of spacing – the two-step that banishes the unitary condition of the moment, that creates within the moment an experience of fission. For it is doubling that elicits the notion that to an original has been added its copy. The double is the simulacrum, the second, the representative of the original. It comes after the first, and in this following, it can only exist as figure or image. But in being seen in conjunction with the original, the double destroys the pure singularity of the first.[201]

The rupture of the unified photographic moment is activated by the addition of the double. The gesture of doubling splits the illusion of the transparent photographic moment: it inserts space into time. According to Krauss, it is this doubling which distinguishes Surrealist photography from its Dada predecessor. However, in both forms of photography, (Dadaist photomontage and Surrealist doubling) breaks are introduced into the legible reality of the photograph. This forces the image to be read as a sign rather than as a transparent presence: the spacing in these kinds of photographs radically undermines photography's illusion of presence. Krauss writes that

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[200] Ibid. p.112
[201] Ibid. p.109

> [t]he photographic image, thus "spaced," is deprived of one of the most powerful of photography's many illusions. It is robbed of a sense of presence. Photography's vaunted capture of a moment in time is the seizure and freezing of presence. It is the image of simultaneity, of the way that everything within a given space at a given moment is present to everything else…But spacing destroys simultaneous presence: for it shows things sequentially, either one after another or external to one another – occupying separate cells. It is spacing that makes it clear…that we are not looking at reality, but at the world infested by interpretation or signification, which is to say reality distended by the gaps or blanks which are the formal preconditions of the sign.[202]

As Krauss points out, the capacity of photographs to capture and seize presence is illusory, and her theory of Dada and Surrealist photography powerfully underscores this idea. In addition, it reconfigures the relationship between the photograph and the eye. As her essay 'The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism' demonstrates, the denial of photographic presence leads to a different way of seeing photographs. Rather than seeing through photographs, a tacit acceptance of the myth of photographic transparency, we are forced to read them. In this context, photography is a form of writing which is legible for meaning, as opposed to a surrogate world made visible through photographic presence. The manipulations of the surrealists ensured that

[202] Ibid. p.107

> the photographic medium is exploited to produce a paradox: the paradox of reality constituted as a sign – or presence transformed into absence, into representation, into spacing, into writing.[203]

The legacy of these photographers is the opening of what Krauss calls a 'fissure' in reality. Photography's distension of reality, the space which she argues is the precondition of the sign, entails that surrealist photographs are more than physical inscriptions i.e. writing in the superficial sense. According to Krauss, they can aspire to the condition of signs due to their ability to insert a "cleavage in reality."[204] The fissure introduced by these photographers ensures that the *syntagm*, or surface structure, of the photograph is not able to be seen as a seamless surface, a natural analogue, but a surface composed of units, gaps and repetitions. Thus the image, argues Krauss, has its own syntax.

As has been previously discussed, for Krauss, photography exemplifies surrealist practice *per se*, that is, all Surrealism is photographic by nature. For Krauss, it is photography's capacity to distend reality, to transform the real into a sign, which is the critical 'photographic condition' of Surrealism. However, in order to account for all of Surrealism through its photographic practice, Krauss must also be able to explain the 'straight' Surrealist photographic print in terms of her thesis on doubling and spacing. To this end, she writes:

> at the very boundary of the image the camera frame which crops or cuts the represented element out of reality-at-large can be seen as another example of spacing. Spacing is the indication of a break in the simultaneous experience of the real, a rupture that issues into

[203] Ibid. p.112
[204] Ibid. p.109

> sequence. Photographic cropping is *always* experienced as a rupture in the continuous fabric of reality. But surrealist photography puts enormous pressure on that frame to make it read as a sign[205]

So for Krauss, photographic spacing is made apparent, not only in the photographic practice of doubling, but by the exclusions and inclusions of the frame. Indeed, she argues that examples of 'straight' surrealist photographic practice such as Salvador Dali's involuntary sculptures, which are close up photographs of rolled up bus tickets and kneaded putty erasers shot by Brassaï, and Man Ray's series of photographs of hats for a book by Tristan Tzara are examples of "the world's constant writing of erotic symbols, its ceaseless automatism."[206] I believe that Krauss' argument that the frame is the annunciation of the photograph as sign is valid. However, I do not think that this way of theorising photographs can in fact distinguish between different *kinds* of photographic practice. Where I consider there to be an unresolved problematic in Krauss' argument is in the lack of distinction between photographic practices which do or do not exert "enormous pressure"[207] on the frame which compels the photograph to be read as a sign. As Krauss herself concedes, photographic cropping always introduces breaks into reality. Underpinning her understanding of surrealist photography is the belief that non-surrealist photographs are indexical, as Barthes puts it, "every photograph is a certificate of presence"[208] – they testify to the existence of the subject in the photograph. Therefore Krauss' argument about surrealist photography's capacity to distend the real indicates a commitment to the referentiality of photography and the notion that

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[205] Ibid. 115
[206] Ibid.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* Richard Howard (trans), London: Vintage, 2000 p.87

photographic images are indexically linked to the real. Her statement which follows is Sontagian in tenor:

> Surrealist photography exploits the special connection to reality with which all photography is endowed. For photography is an imprint or transfer off the real; it is a photochemically processed trace causally connected to that thing in the world to which it refers[209]

Although Krauss does not explicitly argue that photographs are realist she is committed to an indexical account of photography, which, is very similar to statements made by both Roland Barthes and André Bazin. However, the Surrealist concept of Convulsive Beauty, a startling disruption brought about by the appearance of the double, posits that reality is itself a representation. The photographic condition of Surrealisim, the distension of reality, its infestation with interpretation, the uncanny doubling of the real forces us to question our eyes. Rather than photography providing us with a transparent envelope through which we may look at the world, it produces the world as sign, and presence as writing. Thus the automatic writing of the world is revealed by photography:

> What the camera frames and thereby makes visible is the automatic writing of the world: the constant, uninterrupted production of signs.[210]

Following Derrida, Krauss is right to argue that the practice of photographic doubling and spacing, and the intervention of the frame produces photographic signification. However, I do not agree that this

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[209] Rosalind Krauss *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 1986 p.110
[210] Ibid.

can account for a distinction between surrealist and other types of photography. Krauss argues that Surrealism forces the frame to function as a sign, yet she does not offer distinctive surrealist photographic techniques to support this. As Krauss herself points out, the frame functions in the same way in all kinds of photography, it ruptures our experience of reality. Therefore if spacing is the "theoretical apparatus"[211] by which straight photographs are assimilated into surrealist practice, then I would argue that there is nothing distinctive about surrealist photographic practice: it is my contention that all photographs thus spaced can be argued to be signs. All photographs are *invaginated*[212] presences.

The consequence of this is that all photographs signify, indeed not only do they signify or write the world, in their very capacity to double they fracture the subject itself. As we saw earlier, Derrida writes:

> What can look at itself is not one; and the law of the addition of the origin to its representation, of the thing to its image, is that one plus one makes at least three.[213]

Photography is one of reality's reflecting pools in which the world is ceaselessly written. And in the process of writing the world, the world itself is refracted, differenced: reality is ruptured.

IV Cleaving the Laminated Object

The presence of the photographic frame (often merely as an absence) reminds us that we are looking at photographs rather than fragments of

[211] Ibid. p.115
[212] Rosalind Krauss argues that photographic spacing "invaginates" presence. Ibid. p.106
[213] Jacques Derrida *Of Grammatology* Corrected Edition Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (trans), Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997 p.36

reality. As we have already seen, for Krauss, the 'photographic condition' of Surrealism turns upon the medium's capacity, through spacing and doubling, to constitute *reality as a sign*, to defer photographic presence. The ensuing paradox, unsettling and *sur*-real, reinscribes the photographic index as a sign of reality: the surrealist photograph is a proxy for unconscious reality, the undisclosed real. However, as has already been intimated, it is difficult to account for different photographic *practices* using Krauss' argument. Indeed, if we think of photography as being engaged in the casting of time, the camera's shutter also introduces spacings, which become temporalised framings, scraps of the fabric of the world torn from time and place, fixed in an image. This provides an opening for the assertion that all photographs are signs due to their nature as ruptured presences. However, it is not just the frame which writes the world photographically but also the shutter. Krauss herself writes, in an essay about the sculptor Rachel Whiteread, that

> Photography's 'this-has-been'…along with the instantaneous open-and-closing of the shutter, produces the spacing, or the oppositional structure of a paradigm.[214]

The relation of the photograph with time produces a specific kind of spatial structure, a spacing, an oppositional structure. The click of the shutter produces the pattern which underwrites the images produced by the camera. That is, the spatialisation of time is photography's mode of production. If we are to argue that photographic *écriture* is productivity, which we will indeed turn to in the final chapter, the photographic image

[214] Rosalind Krauss *Rachel Whitread: shedding life* Fiona Bradley (ed), London, England : Tate Gallery Publishing, 1996 p.77

which is produced is time written. The photographic 'this-has-been',[215] the world in front of the camera is spaced, sliced into fragments and rearranged: photography has the oppositional structure of a grid. For Rosalind Krauss, photographs are paradigmatically opposed, that is, they are cut from the world and laid out *side by side*.

Uig from the Hebrides (Starboard), Gina Wall

I have explored photographically the notion of time written, the spatialisation of the moving view, in a series of works which ruminated upon the manner in which travel structures new views. Barthes' writing on the blind field, in tandem with previous research on landscape, lead me to consider the exclusions of the view. The overt presence of the photographic frame hints at that which lies beyond the boundary. The

[215] This is written by Krauss in a piece about Rachel Whiteread in which she discusses Barthes intention to write about the sculptor, an intention never fulfilled due to his untimely death. It can be argued that she uses the phrase in deference to Barthes and her account of the photographic index as a cast is Barthesean in tenor.

notion that another photograph lay beyond the frame propelled me to make some images of the landscape which were comprised of more than one shot. Contrary to Barthes' assertion that the *punctum* sustains the subject in the photograph, these "grid" images make apparent the selective nature of photography: they double, fracture and insert spaces into the view.

The image overleaf, *Uig from the Hebrides (Starboard)*, was made on board a ferry and as the result of the moving subject spatial incongruities occur which further emphasises the play in and between the frames. The view of the landscape becomes, to use Krauss' words, "a rupture that issues into sequence"[216], cohering around the black of the frame, quite literally devoid of information, disclosed as absent presences. These grid images are produced by scanning the landscape with the camera, out of necessity and, it must be said, choice, I must work 'blind': after the images were made, the gap which opens up resulting in the loss of the lower half of the man's body was the source of personal fascination. However, this way of working, which I think of in terms of a generative trope of blindness, provides certain freedoms. This trope will be explored later in the thesis, particularly in relation to rethinking the view in Derridean terms.

The overt photographic doubling of the subject, the representation fracturing and splitting the represented, echoes, once again, the Derridean notion of the reflecting pool. This questions Barthes' idea that the referent provides ballast for the 'weightless envelope' of the photograph. On the other hand, the photograph as theorised by Krauss is

[216] Rosalind Krauss *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 1986 p.115

altogether more material. Photographic images are garnered from the

Picture from the roadside, Glen Shiel, Gina Wall

world: the index is tied to the referent from which, she writes, "it is cast"[217]. We have the sense of the physicality of photographs in Krauss' account which, as we saw in the previous chapter, is missing from Barthes' writing on photography. The exteriority of the photographic signifier is repressed by Barthes in order to foreground the referent and preserve the illusion of the unity of image and body. But, as Krauss points out, the paradigmatic opposition of photography's 'this-has-been' and the opening and closing of the shutter sets up a structural relation between the camera and its object. The structural paradigm of photography is inside/outside, subject/object, camera/world: in the arrested photographic moment the subject is objectified.

[217] Rosalind Krauss *Rachel Whiteread: shedding life* ed. Fiona Bradley London, England: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1996 p.77

For Barthes the genius of photography is concerned with the resurrection and enduring presence of the referent, whereas according to Krauss the opening and closing of the shutter inserts a temporal break between the subject and its image: the shutter inserts a space between the two. This break ruptures and defers the presence of the subject, to which Barthes himself attests when he writes of the photograph:

> what I see has been here, in this place which extends between infinity and the subject…it has been here, and yet immediately separated; it has been absolutely, irrefutably present, and yet already deferred[218]

Thus the photograph certifies to the fact of the presence of the subject before the camera, whilst simultaneously deferring this presence. The deferral of which Barthes speaks describes the delay of the subject; the rays which emanate from it touch the spectator from a time before he or she existed. As far as Barthes is concerned, the photograph establishes a continuity by way of contiguity, which, for him, is unavailable to other visual media. However, although there are areas of overlap between Krauss and Barthes (she remains committed to the photographic index), the critical difference between Krauss' thesis on Surrealist photographs and Barthes' genius of The Photograph is the rupture initiated by doubling, framing and the shutter, which Krauss describes as "the movement, in which spacing "invaginates" presence."[219] The contiguity of subject and image, the photograph as Barthesean laminated object in which the subject and photograph are inseparable, is cleaved by Krauss' thesis on

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[218] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* Richard Howard (trans), London: Vintage, 2000 p.77
[219] Rosalind Krauss *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 1986 p.106

Surrealist photography, leaving the putatively unified photographic moment burst open.

This space between the signified and the signifier destabilises photography's claim to presence the subject: between frame and world, shutter and subject, there is a hiatus; an in-between. Whilst Krauss' thesis on Surrealist photography, does not, as I have already demonstrated, adequately account for distinctive photographic practices, it does, I believe, account for photography in general. Thus spacing, either as photographic doubling, or as the insistence of the frame, or the flicker of the shutter, founds photography as a practice of *écriture*: the Barthesean photograph is 'invaginated' and delaminated by Krauss' theory.

So we have seen that photography in general is a practice of elisions and spacing, it is concerned with the exploration of the space between things and images and the generative play of absence. The decision to photograph anything inevitably involves the exclusion of something else.

> The frame announces that between the part of reality that was cut away and this part there is a difference; and that this segment which the frame frames is an example of nature-as-representation, nature-as-sign. As it signals that experience of reality the camera frame also controls it, configures it.[220]

Thus the frame demarcates the boundary between inclusion/exclusion, in order to represent something photographically it is necessary to elide something else: the frame is just another insinuation of the gap between reality and its sign.

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[220] Ibid. p.115

In Barthes' account, to enable the photograph to function as presence, the photographic interstice has to be suppressed, or transversed by the thread of causality, in order to bring the subject into contact with the spectator. The *punctum* bursts across the hiatus pricking the viewer across time and space. However, if we are to believe Krauss' assertion that the frame is also a means by which reality becomes a representation, by way of the insertion of space, a margin between the photograph and the world-as-it-is, and the structuration of an oppositional paradigm, we can argue that all photographs are signs: photography is a practice of writing.

It seems that, for Krauss, *écriture* is difference by the addition of the same: spacing differences the image from the world through doubling, the addition of the copy. This is what Krauss means when she states that Surrealist photographic practice transforms reality into representation, nature into a sign. Following Claude Levi-Strauss she considers the phonemic doubling expressed by infants – the repetition of the sound *pa* to form the word *papa* – as an indicator of meaning. Thus photographic doubling functions in the same way as does the frame, it is "signifier of signification."[221] By the very intentional doubling, though visual rather than phonic, of the photographic act, meaning is signified. Thus for Krauss the photographic trace is indexical and physical insofar as it doubles the world. The invaginaion of the photographic sign cleaves apart the laminated leaves of the photograph and its referent. With this in mind, I now intend to investigate the theoretical space which opens between these leaves. I will investigate Krauss' conception of the photographic trace and *écriture* alongside Derrida's ideas regarding the trace and the role it plays in *grammatology*.

[221] Ibid. p.110

In many respects Krauss' thesis on photographic *écriture* is not radical enough. Although she argues that surrealist photographic practices destroy photography's illusion of presence, Krauss holds on to a belief in the photographic index. She needs photography to have a privileged engagement with the real in order for her thesis on surrealism to work. However, if her thesis on doubling and spacing is taken to be an account of photography as such, all photographs are *écriture*; they write the world, and as we shall see in due course, we can argue that they produce a world. I now intend to look at Krauss' thesis in relation to Derrida's writing on *différance* in order to explicate the concept, introduced earlier, of the subject in difference. The photograph, as we have already seen, can be taken as a reflecting pool which differs the subject from itself. I will now look at this notion that the subject differs from its image, that it is in Derridean terms, sameness in difference.

V Photography as *physis in différance*

Perhaps we should pause to ask whether in thinking the photographic double in terms of the same but not identical, as a sign, do we not fall into the classical trap of continuing to think of the photograph in terms of presence, even if it is deferred? That is, does the photograph function as a sign of that which it indexes, which acts as a proxy, as stand-in or surrogate for the subject itself? As Derrida writes:

> We ordinarily say that a sign is put in place of the thing itself, the present thing – "thing" holding here for the sense as well as the referent. Signs represent the presence in its absence; they take the place of the present. When we cannot take hold of or show the thing, let us say the present, the being-present, when the present does not

> present itself, then we signify, we go through the detour of signs. We take up or give signs; we make signs. The sign would thus be a deferred presence.[222]

The photographic image considered in terms of classical semiotics as outlined by Derrida above, stands in for the subject itself. The photograph represents the subject: in its absence. Barthes cannot take hold of his mother, the being-present, therefore her image is signified through the detour of the photographic sign. The photograph is the proxy of a lost origin. Thus photography as *écriture* is, for Krauss, this deferral of presence. Photographs signify in virtue of the addition of the double: the photographic 'babble' is indicative of the fact that the photographer intends meaning. However, as we shall see in due course, the conception of the photograph as sameness in difference entails that the photograph functions in excess of a classical semiotic reading. Photographs do not simply act as surrogates or deferred presences: they transform the world. But for the meantime, let us continue with Rosalind Krauss before moving on to look further at Jacques Derrida's writing on *différance*.

Insofar as Krauss invokes the doubling, spacing and the grid to account for photography as *écriture*, the character of photography is semiological. According to Krauss, the photographic double is not simply a copy of reality, that is, an analogue of the real, it is the very act of doubling by which Surrealist photography achieves its semiological function. And yet, for Krauss, other photographic practices are to be described in terms of an indexical, presentational account. In order to demonstrate this bifurcation of Krauss' thesis on photography, let us return

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[222] Jacques Derrida 'Différance' in *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* David B. Allison (trans), Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973 p.138

to her example of the photographs of hats which Man Ray made for Tristan Tzara,. That is to say, her conception of Surrealist photography as spaced, thus opaque, on the one hand, and straight photography as presentation, or manifestation of the subject itself on the other means that her thesis on photography is dualistic[223]. Krauss herself argues that photography's "vaunted"[224] capacity to presence the subject is simply an *illusion*, and yet her argument clearly retains a kernel of this illusion in order for the photograph to function as a *presentation*. For Krauss, doubling and spacing are processes available to the (Surrealist) photographer. However, it can be shown that doubling and spacing are photographic *per se* rather than merely being manipulations, and that the frame is not, as Krauss defines it, an "empty sign"[225]. The problem is this: the hats' production of "erotic symbols"[226] is morphological (albeit unconscious) not semiological. Also, the hats are already coded, they are cultural artefacts and therefore it is difficult to agree with Krauss' pronouncement that "Surreality *is* nature convulsed into a kind of writing."[227] Hats, we might argue, are already text. However, if we agree with her that the condition of surreality *is photographic*, it follows that the photographic intervention twists nature into writing.

Krauss' account is problematic in terms of the locus of signification, that is to say, whether the unconscious writing of the world is *presented* photographically, or whether photography writes the world. In order to be committed to photographic presentation, one must subscribe to photographic transparency. Therefore, it is the latter position which this

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[223] To a certain extent this is inevitable insofar as her argument explores surrealist practice which posits a duality between conscious/unconscious.
[224] Rosalind Krauss *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* p.107
[225] Ibid. p.115
[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid. p.113

thesis will develop. Nothwithstanding the problems associated with Krauss'articulation of this, her conception of *écriture* as the addition of the double resonates with Derrida's neographism *différance*. The photographic double differs from itself. *Différance*, which as Derrida argues is neither a word nor a concept, is a movement, a play, a gesture which strikes at the heart of philosophy's metaphysical origins: the oppositional structure from which difference and meaning emerges. Derrida observes that 'to differ' has two distinct meanings:

> The verb "to differ" [differer] seems to differ from itself. On the one hand, it indicates difference as distinction, inequality, or discernability; on the other, it expresses the interposition of delay, the interval of *spacing* and *temporalizing* that puts off until "later" what is presently denied, the possible that is presently impossible.[228]

Thus, to differ does not have a singular identity; it means either differentiation or deferment. For Derrida, "to differ" is thus the site of sameness and non-identity: two different meanings issuing from the same word. His neographism *différance* serves to mark this sameness and non-identity:

> We provisionally give the name *différance* to this sameness which is not *identical*: by the silent writing of its *a*, it has the desired advantage of referring to differing, both as spacing/temporalizing and as the movement that structures every dissociation.[229]

The silent mark of the *a* indicates an inaudible differentiation between the *e* of *difference* and *différance*. To an extent, the neographism overturns

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[228] Jacques Derrida 'Différance' in *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* David B. Allison (trans), Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973 p.129
[229] Ibid pp. 129-130

the privilege of speech over writing and underlines Derrida's assertion that there is no purely phonetic writing, as there is no purely phonic phonè. The "tacit monument"[230] which is the *a* of *différance* can only be seen and not heard: the tomb is silent. However, even in so far as the *a* of *différance* is visible, it evades understanding. As Derrida points out, the difference between two phonemes is inaudible and it may be argued that although the *a* of *différance* is visible, the "graphic difference" between the e and the a "itself sinks into darkness".[231] That is, the difference 'itself' remains invisible. We see only the one, or the other, not the difference itself:

> It never constitutes the fullness of a sensible term, but draws out an invisible connection, the mark of an inapparent relation between two spectacles…since…the difference between the *e* and the *a* marked in "*différance*" eludes vision and hearing, this happily suggests that we must here let ourselves be referred to an order that no longer refers to sensibility. But we are not referred to intelligibility either…We must be referred to an order that resists philosophy's founding opposition between the sensible and the intelligible.[232]

Différance calls into question the opposition between the sensible and the intelligible, the signifier and the signified. However, the economy or resource of the sign still has some utility. Meaning issues from differences, difference issues from the language system which precedes the speaking subject. What, therefore enables language and difference to be produced? Derrida answers: *différance*. For Derrida, *différance* is the primordial (but non-simple origin) "protowriting"[233] or play, which

[230] Ibid. p.132
[231] Ibid p.133
[232] Ibid.
[233] Ibid. p.146

generates and sustains difference. However, *différance* can neither be thought nor defined, for each time it appears, it erases itself.

> Every concept is necessarily and essentially inscribed in a chain or system, within which it refers to another and to other concepts, by the systematic play of differences. Such a play, then – *différance* – is no longer simply a concept, but the possibility of conceptuality, of the conceptual system and process in general…The difference that Saussure speaks about, therefore, is neither itself a concept nor one word among others. We can say this *a fortiori* for *différance*. Thus we are brought to make the relation between the one and the other explicit.[234]

Différance resists philosophy's founding opposition because, as Derrida writes, it maintains it. Thus *différance* is incompatible with the notion that the binary sign is composed of the sensible signifier and the intelligible signified. Derrida erases or crosses off the sign ("that ill-named thing"[235]), for the sign has no thingness, it is the proxy of a lost source. The sign marks difference, it is that which it is not: its difference is unseen and unheard. The sign is crossed off, yet allowed to stand, for we have no recourse other than to language.

> The "formal essence" of the sign can only be determined in terms of presence. One cannot get around that response, except by challenging the very form of the question and beginning to think that the sign ~~is~~ that ill-named ~~thing~~, the only one, that escapes the instituting question of philosophy: "what is…?"[236]

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[234] Ibid. p.140
[235] Jacques Derrida *Of Grammatology* Corrected Edition Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (trans), Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997 p.19
[236] Ibid. pp. 18-19

The sign, the very stuff of language slides from philosophy's grasp: the material being of language escapes definition and thus undermines all philosophical claims to truth. Although the opposition between the signified and the signifier is never absolute, according to Derrida, the sign continues as a valuable resource which enables the transformations of language through translation. I intend to explore this in more detail during the ensuing chapter, where I propose that in writing the world, photography transforms it.

Différance, neither a word nor a concept, is resolutely undefinable: it precedes language and gives rise to difference. *Différance* is Derrida's "avowedly paradoxical name for the primordial movement or 'play' of being which gives rise to differences."[237] Thus *différance* is the non-simple origin of difference. It is the play which sustains difference, a play which cannot be mastered, *différance* has no subject or author. *Différance* is the undetermined substratum of language or any other code which enables difference. If we return to Derrida's words on the trace, considered earlier in the chapter:

> The use of language or the employment of any code which implies a play of forms - with no determined or invariable substratum - also presupposes a retention and protention of differences, a spacing and temporalizing, a play of traces. This play must be a sort of inscription prior to writing, a protowriting without a present origin, without an arché.[238]

[237] *Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy* Mautner, Thomas (ed) London: Penguin 2000 p.143
[238] Jacques Derrida 'Différance' in *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* David B. Allison (trans), Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973 p.146

Although Derrida is sceptical of the metaphysical latencies in any system of opposing terms, as we have seen, he does not seek to completely dispense with the opposition between the signified and the signifier, although he does demonstrate that this opposition is not absolute. And although *différance* sustains this opposition, it is important that we do not think this play in terms of a dialectical movement between each pair of opposing terms.

> Contrary to the metaphysical, dialectical, and "Hegelian" interpretation of the economic movement of *différance*, we must admit a game where whoever loses wins and where one wins and loses each time. If the diverted presentation continues to be somehow definitively and irreducibly withheld, this is not because a particular present remains hidden or absent, but because *différance* holds us in a relation with what exceeds (though we necessarily fail to recognize this) the alternative of presence or absence.[239]

Although Derrida writes here of the alterity of the unconscious, we can, in a sense, extend this way of thinking about absence and presence to the sign. The deferment of the sign is thus not a temporary retardation, a postponement which nonetheless will eventually enable the deferred to present itself. Rather, the sign, as facilitated by the movement of *différance* is permanently withheld. As Derrida writes, this is not due to the hiddenness of presence, the necessity of unveiling being as presence, but his notion that *différance* sustains difference in such a way that exceeds opposition. The sign therefore goes beyond the notion of absence and presence as alternatives, that is, *other* to one another. Rather than these categories standing in opposition to one another, Derrida asks us to think of the one as the *différance* of the other. And if we think of the

[239] Ibid. p.151

photographic sign as permanently deferred, the photographic signifier cannot present or presence its signified: the photograph is incapable of the disclosure of the real. Photography, contrary to Susan Sontag's assertion, is not a practice of unmasking the world, causing it to become unhidden. Conversely, by way of the photographic re-inscription of the world, the photograph is a reconfiguration of the same; it is sameness in difference.

> We could thus take up all the coupled oppositions on which philosophy is constructed, and from which our language lives, not in order to see opposition vanish but to see the emergence of a necessity such that one of the terms appears as the *différance* of the other, the other as "differed" within the systematic ordering of the same (e.g., the intelligible as differing from the sensible, as sensible differed; the concept as differed-differing intuition, life as differed-differing matter; mind as differed-differing life; culture as differed-differing nature; and all the terms designating what is other than *physis* – *technè*, *nomos*, society, freedom, history, spirit, etc. – as *physis* differed or *physis* differing: *physis* in *différance)*. It is out of the unfolding of this "same" as *différance* that the sameness of difference and repetition is presented in the eternal return.[240]

The importance of photography as sameness in difference will be explored further during the next chapter. However, the investigation will be informed by Derrida's non-concept *différance*, which has just been discussed. I will therefore explore further the idea that the photograph is the *différance* of the world: a Derridean "*physis in différance*".

[240] Ibid. pp.148-149

VI Concluding Remarks

Throughout this chapter we have looked at Roland Barthes' idea that the genius of photography is the touch of different space times coupled with the photograph's capacity to resurrect the loved one. We explored this conception of the photograph bringing the subject to presence in relation to Sausurre's definition of the sign as the transparency between thought and speech. According to Saussure, as speaking subjects we understand ourselves because we are present to ourselves at the moment of utterance i.e. our thoughts and words are contiguous and synchronous. This self-presence resonates strongly with the subjects' self-identity in the photograph: the referent persists *through* the photograph. However, as we have seen, Derrida argues that the sign is deferred by the duration of a breath, even in formulating and articulating our words we are already in the process of the indicative detour. Therefore the sign never closes, it is permanently deferred, or delayed.

In summary, the touch of the Barthesean photograph can be seen as a motif for the metaphysics of presence, Derrida's critique of metaphysics (or the study of being) thought in terms of self-identity. Thus just as in Sausurrean terms we are present in hearing ourselves speak, Barthes mother is brought to presence through the photograph – the contiguity of which he speaks is the touch of mother and son – across time and space. However, if we take the photograph to be the structuration of difference, photographic practice as writing, which I propose to term *photogrammatology*, a photograph is sameness in difference. In sameness in difference we have the conception of the photographic double, *écriture* as the production of text in which the image of Barthes' mother is read rather than seen.

This notion of reading reality, is consistent with Rosalind Krauss' argument regarding the capacity of Surrealist photographs to convulse reality into a representation. This occurs due to the invagination of the sign through rupture and doubling, and this idea has a resonance with Derrida's writing which questions the unity of the sign. The conception of reality as writing also has strong parallels with the thesis of the landscape as text. However, we should exercise caution, because although Derrida's expanded field of writing would support the thesis of world as *écriture*, text or grammatology, he does resist the idea that writing is representation. Writing as representation, or in Saussurean terms, writing as the external clothing of language, is problematic for Derrida as it is a tacit endorsement of the hegemonic privilege of speech over writing in the history of philosophy. This assumption is deconstructed by Derrida and, as we will see later, for him there is nothing outside of text. That is to say, the text does not refer to something outside of itself, it does not point transparently to a referent. Instead, the text simply refers to another text in an endless play of textuality. Finally, having reviewed the positions of Barthes, Sontag, Derrida and Krauss, the groundwork has been laid for a closer scrutiny of the inter-relationship between textuality, meaning and photography. The significance of this play of textuality will be central to the following chapter in which we will seek to understand the relationship between 'landtext' and *photogrammatology*. The relation in practice between these two terms and the significance that this has for the thesis will be discussed next.

Chapter 4

In-between the text of the landscape and the photograph

I Inside/Out; Trace

II Cut and Stitch: a new world of images

III Parergonality and the products of photowriting

IV Intertextuality

V Light, the touch of the intertext

VI Concluding remarks

I Inside/Out; Trace

In building the elements of my argument we have discussed the following:
1) The problematic of metaphysics conceived in terms of binary opposition, which early in the initial chapter was considered in relation to Roman Jackobson's idea of the markedness of oppositional terms, that is, the conception that in any binary opposition, one term is always dominant, or marked, which reflects cultural values and assumptions.
2) In the following chapter we looked at Bruno Latour's argument regarding the need to move beyond old objects, which are clearly bounded and defined, in order to embrace new objects which are held in a relation with their producers, a matrix or network which includes the complex of the object's production.
3) We went on to look at Jacques Derrida's non-concept *différance* and the notion that metaphysics or being is difference which is an unfolding of the same *in différance*. We briefly touched upon the import of this way of thinking about photography at the close of the last chapter. It is towards this question which constitutes the major component of my argument that I shall now turn: the conception of photography as *physis in différance*.

As our deliberations on the binary oppositions of metaphysics have demonstrated thus far, to think photography as a practice with fixed subject/object relations is a strange problematic. The conception that the lens is an objectifier (*l'objectif*), which forms a boundary or barrier between itself and world, inscribing the practice of photography in terms of the binary opposition interior/exterior is at once intuitively correct and yet returns the camera to the status of monocular picturing device, a position from which we have already tried to escape. Derrida shows us that these oppositions (the binary differences of metaphysics) are *produced* rather than inherent in being: these differences are produced

by *différance*. Thus we could say that the chamber of the camera, which structures the relation between itself and world as inside/outside, is in turn produced by *différance*. The conception of the photograph as an exteriority, an inscription of the camera's interior is produced by *différance*. Photography, thought of as "*physis in différance*" undermines the notion that the photographic interior is somehow separate from the outside world and this enables the relationship between the photograph and the world to be reconfigured as "the other as "differed" within the systematic ordering of the same"[241]. Thus the photograph is part of the world, photography is a means of actualising the world, but the world and the photograph are transformed by one another. The language of the world transforms the language of photography and the language of photography transforms the language of the world.

The photograph as invaginated sign, explored in the previous chapter, has some utility at this stage of the discussion. As Derrida writes in *Positions*, although the relation between the signifier and the signified is not a universal, fixed opposition, for example, there are not direct correlations between signifiers in different languages, the relationship between the components of the deferred sign serve a function. Indeed, in certain instances we cannot do without them:

> That this opposition [between the signified and the signifier] is never radical or absolute does not prevent it from functioning, and even from being indispensable within certain limits – very wide limits. For example, no translation would be possible without it…translation practices the difference between signified and signifier. But if this difference is never pure, no more so is translation, and for the notion of

[241] Jacques Derrida 'Différance' *Speech and Phenomena , and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* David B. Allison (trans), Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973 p.148

> translation we would have to substitute a notion of *transformation*: a regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another.[242]

The photograph, as a signifier of a signifer, an image of a text, transforms the world, it writes the landscape. The lens does not come between the film and the world, it is part of the world: photography is a gesture of transformation.

During the first chapter we investigated certain preconceptions regarding the view in the landscape *genre*. In order to move beyond the notion of the landscape as view, and landscape photography as a practice of 'picturing' the view, we investigated the idea that the landscape could be considered as a text, that is, an artefact which is culturally inscribed. This idea of the culturally inscribed landscape as text, or landtext, which changes over time and under the gaze of many onlookers, resonates strongly with post-structuralist ideas about the movement of text. The landtext, mobile and fleeting, eludes fixed meanings. Transforming our understanding of the landscape from one of a picture or view, to landscape as text, has enabled me to engage photographically with landscape as a changing inscription. The characterisation of the relation between the flickering shutter, the lens and the world as the momentary capture of a fleeting image (which then comes to *persist* iconically as a surrogate) is challenged. This change in the relationship is exemplified by the practitioner's continual return to a location, which facilitates the enduring difference of the same (change in the land) to be recorded. Thus the concept that the momentary time base of the photograph is fixed becomes open to question. We might even argue that a

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[242] Jacques Derrida *Positions* Alan Bass (trans), New York; London: Continuum, 2004 p.19

photograph persists over multiple exposures, that it is built rather than frozen, accreted, an oppositional paradigm, as Krauss describes it: the photograph is laid out side by side.

The exploration of the notion of photography as writing/*écriture,* or in Derridean terms, the photograph as *gram*, in the last chapter facilitated the investigation of the so-called decisive or unified photographic moment. This proceeded by way of questioning the presence of the photographic subject through recourse to the writings of Derrida and Krauss on the sign as the structured and permanent delay or deferral of presence. The practice of photography, taken to be a form of writing, not only produces photographic texts, but also opens a space of practice. *Practice-as-writing* is this space where the possibility of meaning opens. Thus meaningful photographs are not full of meaning (i.e. replete with the *plenitude* of meaning). Rather, the photographic sign is an opening for meaning in and through its relation with other signs. The photographic sign is that which it is not, and this is critical for photographic practice insofar as the body of work becomes meaningful by way of the gaps within and between signs. *Différance* produces oppositional differences, one term is the *différance* of the other: the sign always carries within it the trace of the other. *Ecriture* opens difference and the products of *écriture*, texts carry "a trace, and a trace of the effacement of a trace"[243] within them.

As Derrida writes, each opposition is the *différance* of the other: culture differed differing nature; subject differed differing object. And as we have already seen, Derrida lauds Saussure's notion of the relational

[243] Jacques Derrida, '*Différance*', *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs,* David B. Allison (trans), Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973 p.156

structure of language as difference: the sign *is* that which it is not. Thus it is the invisible and inaudible differences between signs that enable them to mean, rather than their meaningful presence. So, for Derrida at least, the proposition of the differential and relational structure of language is one of Saussure's key achievements. The sign therefore carries otherness within its very structure and *différance* as writing is therefore the articulation of the relation between opposites, neither passive nor active, in the middle voice, in tension between the two but also in excess of both. *Différance* is the articulation of the one as the differed other; the other deferred and delayed. But what do we mean when we correlate photography as writing/*écriture* with *différance*? The notion of the photograph as *différance*, as this is neither a word nor a concept is in fact "inconceivable",[244] it resists definition in itself but the photograph as the *différance* of the world produces difference: it articulates sameness in difference. Photography as *physis in différance* opens the possibility that the photographic images are the eternal play of difference which bear the trace of the other. This runs counter to Sontag's articulation of the photographic inscription as "something directly stencilled off of the real, like a footprint or a death mask…a material vestige of its subject"[245], or indeed, as Barthes would have it, as the imprint of Christ's face on the *sudarium*, an *acheiropoesis*.[246] Rather, the photograph does not presence the subject, indeed it resists *re*presentation, and, in so doing, distends and spaces it, delaying and deferring the subject's presence and facilitating a chain of signification which can never be closed. The potential of the other resides in the space between: the trace.

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[244] Ibid. p.151
[245] Susan Sontag *On Photography* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002 p.154
[246] Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* Richard Howard (trans), London: Vintage, 2000 p.82

However, to think of the photograph as a physical inscription, a physical trace of the real, is to represence the subject-in-the-photograph: to argue that the photographic trace brings the subject to presence. For Derrida, the trace never presences itself, as soon as it appears, it erases itself, and, as the *a* of *différance* attests, as soon as it is read, it is inaudible. Gayatri Chakavorty Spivak writes of the trace that, in Derrida's usage, it is

> A word that cannot be a master-word, that presents itself as the mark of an anterior presence, origin, master.[247]

The French word 'trace' retains the association of track, footprint, spoor. Thus the trace is the imprint of an other, it derives its being from the presence of something going before it. The trace is in itself no thing, it is the residual marker of presence that once was. The trace has no origin: "it disappear[s] in its appearing"[248]. The notion of the photographic tracery of the subject is evocative indeed, but as we saw a little earlier, to think through the Derridean trace in terms of photographic images is not to simply equate it with an imprint of its subject. To talk of the photographic trace is to talk of an image which is not, to borrow from Spivak, a master-image, but an insubstantiated, substanceless reflection.

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[247] Gayatri Chakavorty Spivak *Of Grammatology* Corrected Edition Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (trans), Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997 p. xv

[248] Jacques Derrida 'Différance' in *Speech and Phenomena , and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* David B. Allison (trans), Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973 p.165

Untitled, 1990 (hole from Berlin wall; swarm of flies) Paul Graham, 1990

The very invocation of 'trace' for photography, in Derridean terms, is a denial of the presence in the photograph. It denies photographic realism, in the sense that Barthes and Sontag understand it, the realism of photography being its capacity to bear the evidence of a past reality.

> It is evident – it is evidence itself – that system and nonsystem, the same and the absolutely other, etc., cannot be conceived *together*.[249]

Thus to think of the photographic image as a trace opens a play of the substantial and the insubstantial within the photographic itself. The subject-in-the-photograph is no thing, a shadow bound in the photographic material. Thus the evidentiary power of the photograph is called into question. The photograph relies on its caption to steer its reading, yet it can allow imaginative leaps, as in the paired photographic works of Paul Graham. The hole in the ground, a void which remains after

[249] Ibid. p.151

the removal of the Berlin Wall is hung alongside an image of a swarm of flies, frozen staccato by the use of a flash gun. The photographer brings together two disparate images and encourages us to make visual connections across the gutter between each image. The void space of the hole in the ground calls to mind the photographic denial of presence, the notion that these static visions are but textual constructions.

The photographic trace is imprinted in the granular ground of the materials of photography. Thus the photograph as *physis in différance* is the subtle interplay between thing and no thing, substance and shadow. The photographic as *différance* is the production of absence and presence, it is the eternal delay of the subject, and if we think of the photograph as *écriture*, it is the play of difference in which the photograph has no origin. To track the spoor of the photograph is futile, for it leads to no place, no one.

II Cut and stitch: a new world of images

The photograph does not point inexorably back through time towards its subject, as we saw in the previous chapter, the lens doubles; it cuts images or signifiers from the world. Indeed, Walter Benjamin describes the photographer as a surgeon who reaches into the body, through the lens the photographer surgeon is in contact with the world. He places the photographer in opposition to the painter, the magician, who is distanced from it the world:

> Magician and surgeon compare to painter and cameraman. The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web. There is a tremendous difference between the pictures they obtain. That of the painter is a

> total one, that of the cameraman consists of multiple fragments which are assembled under a new law.[250]

The photographer surgeon reaches in and extracts images from the world. The simulacrum is sutured together along with other doubles to form new texts of the world, a new body of images stitched from unmatched parts. Benjamin speaks of the *image world*: a body of photographs brought together. However, even insofar as the photographers' apparatus is contiguous with the world, it is not in touch with our experience of the world. The ocular metaphor of photography is just that: metaphorical. The camera is a tool, which, if we are to follow Benjamin, enables the photographer to reach in and pluck images from the world, to pick up a stitch from the fabric of the landscape and to weave it into a new set of relations, a new image world, a new text.

If our deliberations convince us that we don't frame landscape to form a view, or the landscape does not present itself to us as view, and that landscapes are collections of spaces stitched together, it no longer makes sense to argue that landscapes are 'pictured'. Landscapes weave in and out of each other, they are textural surfaces fabricated by interwoven references, the landscape therefore does not have any actual exclusions or edges: the text of the land is without boundary; it bleeds into our peripheral vision. So we are always already inside the text of the landscape. The landscape is not a matter of distantiated contemplation, but the condition of an active encounter. We do not stand outside of the landscape but are within it, we are part of the writing of the world. The lens is also part of the writing of the world: it rewrites the world written. The

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[250] Walter Benjamin 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' in *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds), Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1998 p.516

text of the world is not simply laid down as sediment on the land's surface, evident upon it; it is inscribed *in* it. Foucault writes:

> What appears to me to be deceiving and naïve in reflections on and analyses of signs is that one supposes them to be always already there, deposited on the figure of the world[251]

The landscape as a system of signs is not simply there, lying in wait to be read. Rather, as Foucault suggests, signs are not always, already there, but constantly in the process of inscription. Landscape as text is therefore continually in process, it is always being written. Our environment is modified by cultural inscriptions: the landscape is shaped politically, we only need to think of the visual (and environmental) impact of our cycles of activity, such as farming, land development and travel. Now, if the experience of looking at the landscape is this continual reference from signifier to signifier, the text of the land is never static. Our readings of it are never static, landscape references ideas, ideas reference other ideas, other images and so on.

As a photographic practitioner, I find myself inside the text of the landscape and in reinscribing it photographically, this text becomes a trace of a trace. The photograph, if thought as writing/*écriture* is not a depiction of my experience of the landscape, how can it be? The photographic detour might be thought of as a failure to signify experience, which is an assertion with which I would agree. The photograph cannot signify the experience of place, in this sense the photographic signifier *is* empty. However, the notion of the emptiness of the photographic signifier, or its incapacity to signify experience, does not

[251] Michel Foucault *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology* James Faubion (ed), Robert Hurley (trans), London: Penguin, 2000 p.266

disturb me, for it recalls Derrida's criticism of Saussure's conception of writing, which is the result of philosophy's historical legacy. He describes it as:

> the historico-metaphysical reduction of writing to the rank of instrument enslaved to a full and originarily spoken language.[252]

To make our point, we might bastardize Derrida's words and say that the photograph as an exteriority, fails to embody an internal and proximate experience of the landscape, which can be expressed as photography reduced to an instrument enslaved to a full and originarily *lived* experience. Therefore, rather than worry that photographs are merely the barren imprints of an originally lived experience, (i.e. no substitute for it and unable to signify experience) we may as well accept photography's failure in this regard. However, the camera as an instrument of writing opens the in-between, the leaves of the laminated object have been teased apart, the sign invaginated. The relation between the landtext and photowriting therefore becomes a question of intertextuality.

The spacing of the sign, "the order of the signified" writes Derrida "is…discrepant by the time of a breath…from the order of the signifier."[253] As we shall see in due course, this rupture is a characteristic of writing in general, including visual signs. I would now like to explore a little more fully the idea alluded to earlier that the differential structure of the photographic encounter is a product of *différance*. That is to say, the inside/outside binarism is *produced* photographically; photographs are the products of the differential structure of photographic writing.

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[252] Jacques Derrida *Of Gramatology* Corrected Edition Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (trans), Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997 p.29
[253] Ibid. p.18

The very etymology of the word 'camera' invokes an image of a sequestered space of privilege, as in a judge's chambers. Additionally, in terms of the physical and historical development of photography, it is impossible to escape from the material fact of the camera as a darkened room penetrated by light. As in Plato's allegory of the cave, the light images fixed by photography are the shadow play of reflections which dance on the back wall of the film plate. Roland Barthes denies the lineage of photography through the use of the *camera obscura* by painters for the simple reason that the touch of photography is what matters to him: the photographic is an event, a performativity which is only enabled by the intervention of the chemistry by which the shadow play may be revealed. As we saw in chapter two, this tendency in Barthes' thinking leads him to deny the camera's existence, to deny its instrumentality and to cherish the transparency of the photographic envelope.

However, as far as I am concerned, the photographic moment is interventionist. In working with a camera I cannot deny its existence and yet questioning the separateness of the camera from world begins to soften the intervention, to suggest that the two meet seamlessly or fold together, an intertwining as in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Chiasma*. So, perhaps we might think of the camera as a frame after all, not in terms of framing the view but as a *parergon*. Thus the inside/outside distinction can be seen as an effect of *parergonality*. The camera is between the image and the world, actualising a new configuration of the world, whilst simultaneously effacing and burying itself.[254] Therefore we may allow

[254] Derrida writes that "The trace has, properly speaking, no place, for effacement belongs to the very structure of the trace…In addition, and from the start, effacement constitutes it as a trace – effacement establishes the trace in a change of place and

what we previously considered to be a troubling inside/outside dichotomy to persist as an effect of framing. In taking this to be an effect of the photographic *parergon* rather than a rigid binary distinction, the notion of inside and outside as a fluid and changing relationship between the image and its subject enable us to persist with a reading of photography that is at once interventionist and yet connected to the world. Indeed, the particularity of the photographic frame deserves further attention as this will have a bearing on our explorations of photographic writing.

III Parergonality and the products of photowriting

Is the frame (the blank area around a roll film negative) inside or outside the image? It is produced by the camera and registered, in absence/*in absentia*, on the film. Camera types vary and with this variety comes a variance of frame types. Sometimes a camera leaves a particular trace in the frame – a nick or a rough edge – caused by damage or manufacture. The frame in 35mm or 120 film spaces the images: it ruptures and breaks the images which is, as Krauss puts it, "a rupture that issues into sequence"[255]: the images are disseminated sequentially. One might ask the question: where does the photographic image end, at the boundary of the frame, or the very edge of the film? Are the inscriptions of the make of the film, the numbers, or the sprocket holes part of the photograph? Does the frame delimit, delineate, describe, or reveal the work? Is the means of production, the very industry of photography part of the work? These are the very questions that Derrida addresses in 'Parergon' from *The Truth in Painting*. He writes of the frame that:

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makes it disappear in its appearing, makes it issue forth from itself in its very position." 'Différance' in *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* David B. Allison (trans), Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973 p.156

[255] Rosalind Krauss *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 1986 p. 115

Parerga have a thickness, a surface which separates them not only (as Kant would have it) from the integral inside, from the body proper of the *ergon*, but also from the outside, from the wall on which the painting is hung, from the space in which the statue or column is erected, then, step by step, from the whole field of historical, economic, political inscription in which the drive to signature is produced.[256]

Blackhills, Moray, Gina Wall

As I argued during chapter three, following Rosalind Krauss's thesis on the photographic conditions of surrealism, the photographic frame is the signifier of photography as writing, or signification. The frame structures the photograph as sign, and as such, it inserts a space between signifier and signified, whilst simultaneously generating images (or signifiers of

[256] Jacques Derrida *The Truth in Painting* Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod (trans) Chicago Ill.; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987 p. 61

signifiers) which are copies, cut from the world and laid out in relation to one another. The image has a syntax, which in the case of some of my landscape photographs, takes the form of a grid with overlaps, doublings and gaps. These images remind us that our eyes are always moving, that we build our perceptions from sense data and memories. Relative positions are significant: the images register small changes in stance, angle of view; the relational nature of the landscape and reader is emphasised.[257]

In spite of my efforts to suppress the view, strangely it appears to rewrite itself; this reassembled view risks *re*centring the viewer. However, it is important to bear in mind that Derrida's deconstructive reading is not simply an inversion of logocentric prejudice.[258] As Christopher Norris writes:

> Derrida insists that deconstruction is a process of 'displacement' endlessly at work…rather than…an act of critical intervention that would come, so to speak, *from outside* and simply apply the standard technique for reversing some 'logocentric' order of priorities.[259]

The view, the occularcentrism of the photographic register, therefore cannot be challenged from outside. One must be inside the view in order to deconstruct it, at which point we inevitably run the risk of constructing that which we seek to deconstruct.[260] We might therefore argue that deconstructing photography's hegemony of occularcentrism is not

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[257] The eyes move in small jumps, called *saccades*, in ordinary vision. It is by means of these tiny movements that vision actually occurs. The notion of 'static vision' is illusion only; perception is always in motion, always in judgments of differences, however minute.
[258] Christopher Norris *Derrida* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987 p.56
[259] Ibid.
[260] "a condition of deconstruction may be at work – part of the system to be deconstructed already at work not at the centre but in an eccentric centre – participating in the construction of what it threatens to deconstruct." Jacques Derrida interviewed in *Derrida*, Dir. Kirby Dick, Amy Ziering Kofman, Drakes Avenue Pictures, 2006

something that is achieved once and for all, but proposes a schedule of practice which has no end. Additionally, these 'critical interventions', as Norris puts it, must come from inside language, and in the case of the ocular metaphor of photography, from inside of photographic practice.

Earlier in this chapter we considered the idea that the troubling inside/outside dichotomy of photography is an effect of parergonality, or framing. I now intend to look more closely at Derrida's critique of Kant found in 'Parergon' in *The Truth in Painting*. In this piece of writing, Derrida argues that not only are *parerga* separate from the *ergon*, the work itself, but they can be distinguished from the outside of the work i.e. the wall which the framed piece (painting, photograph etc) is hung, or the space where a three-dimensional work is to be installed. The *parergon* is neither intrinsic nor extrinsic to the work: neither nor; either/or; yet it enables the work to originate. However Kant states that *parerga* are to be more than "finery"[261] (ornamentation) and this leads Derrida to argue that the supplementarity of the *parergon* points to a lack in the *ergon*:

> What constitutes them as *parerga* is not simply their exteriority as a surplus, it is the internal structural link which rivets them to the lack in the interior of the *ergon*. Without this lack, the *ergon* would have no need of a *parergon*. The *ergon's* lack is the lack of a *parergon*, of the garment or the column which nevertheless remains exterior to it.[262]

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[261] "Thus it is with the frames (*Einfassungen*) of pictures or the drapery on statues, or the colonnades of palaces. But if the ornamentation does not itself enter into the composition of the beautiful form – if it is merely to win approval for the picture by means of its charm – it is then called finery (*parure*) (*Schmuck*) and takes away from the genuine beauty" Immanuel Kant cited by Derrida p. 53 *The Truth in Painting* Bennington and Ian McLeod (trans) Chicago Ill.; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987

[262] Jacques Derrida *The Truth in Painting* Bennington and Ian McLeod (trans) Chicago Ill.; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987 pp. 59-60

Thus the work/*ergon* cannot exist in totality without the *parergon*/frame. The frame does more than simply demarcate the work, it effectively brings the work into presence, from the outside. It naturalises the notion of an intrinsically complete artwork. The work is incomplete without the frame, yet the *parergon* is not intrinsic to the work, but for Kant contradictorily, aesthetic judgement can only bear on that which is *intrinsic* to the work. The *parergon* thus problematises the conception of aesthetic judgement because, as Derrida writes,

> one must know – this is a fundamental presupposition, presupposing what is fundamental - how to determine the intrinsic - what is framed - and know what one is excluding as frame and outside-the-frame. We are thus *already* at the unlocatable centre of the problem.[263]

That which is intrinsic to the work and therefore the proper object of aesthetic judgement is "unlocatable"[264]. This, argues Derrida, leads Kant to describe the frame as

> a *parergon*, a hybrid of outside and inside, but a hybrid which is not a mixture or half-measure, an outside which is called to the inside of the inside in order to constitute it as an inside[265]

The paradox is that which is intrinsic to the work relies upon an extrinsic framing, an exterior, to enable the interior of the work to be constituted: without the extrinsic, the intrinsic cannot come to be. Although the problem of distinguishing the *parergon* from *mere finery* remains, in a sense Kant's notion of the need for *parergonality* to articulate the *ergon* is

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[263] Ibid. p.63
[264] Ibid.
[265] Immanuel Kant cited by Derrida in *The Truth in Painting* Bennington and Ian McLeod (trans) Chicago Ill.; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987 p.63

allied to Derrida's relational understanding of meaning, that is, meaning as a trace structure of difference. Thus inside/outside produced by *différance* is part of the "general difference" that Derrida calls "writing".[266] The *parergon*, although opposable to *ergon*, is not simply one side of an oppositional structure. The *parergon* is the articulation of the supplement: it is the supplementarity of the *parergon* which challenges the very notion of the *purity* of the work:

> For Kant, the purity of the work can be augmented – supplemented – by things that belong to it only provisionally, tentatively, inessentially, since they remain strictly outside it. Yet still they augment its 'purity,' a purity that must therefore have been always less than pure from the start. From the beginning, then, the original purity of the work of art contains a *lack*. It is this lack (an originary lack) that the supplement supplements.
>
> So the work of supplementarity turns out to be essential to the constitution of 'the work itself'. Essential, but also threatening, because it reveals that without the supplement there is no 'itself' of the work…the difference between 'inside' and 'outside' is rendered undecidable.[267]

As Derrida himself writes in *Deconstruction Engaged*, the visual is "never totally "pure," never free of traces".[268] Thus the aesthetic object is never pure, never sealed off from other modes of engagement, i.e. language. This calls into question the very purity of aesthetic judgements and asks if there is any such thing as pure visuality.

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[266] Niall Lucy *A Derrida Dictionary* Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004 p. 158
[267] Ibid. 136-137
[268] Niall Lucy citing Jacques Derrida in *A Derrida Dictionary* Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004 p.160

Thus the notion that photography's mode of operation is to generate a field of difference, that it is a kind of writing, renders the photographic as a space of both language and the visual, a weaving, binding, crossing over of both: the relationship between each, constantly folding as weft over warp, to weave a field of textuality. And this field of textuality, practice as writing, forms a generalised practice operating as a system of differences, produces what Derrida would describe as "meaning-effects"[269]. The text of the world is not represented by photographic practice, rather, in accordance with Derrida's notion that there is no outside of the text, photographic practice as writing gives us another text. Niall Lucy writes that:

> Because the structure of the inscriptive mark or 'gram' is typical of signs in general, then, Derrida argues that all meaning-effects are products of a general sign system of differences which is *grammatological* rather than 'semiotic' or 'representational' in nature[270]

Thus we might say that any meaning(s) conferred by a photographic practice (characterised as writing) are meaning-effects generated and produced by a general system of differences, a grammatology. If there is nothing outside of the text i.e. no referent or originary presence to which the text transparently refers, all we have are layers, or sequences of texts each referring to another in a continual chain of signification. Barthes' Winter Garden Photograph simply cannot presence his mother: the treasury of rays is a fictive emanation, a *product* of grammatology.

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[269] Niall Lucy *A Derrida Dictionary* Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004 p.160
[270] Ibid.

> Purity and presence are grammatological effects, effects of a general writing. There is nothing outside this general writing and inside it nothing that is pure and full of presence.[271]

For Barthes, the referent persists in the photograph, but for Derrida, the referent is simply another text. Therefore under Derrida's reading, in her life and death Barthes' experience of his mother was textual:

> every referent, all reality has the structure of a differential trace, and that one cannot refer to this "real" except in an interpretative experience. The latter neither yields meaning nor assumes it except in a movement of differential referring. That's all.[272]

Thus it is necessary to pay attention to the work of the *parergon* as the articulation of the *ergon* or interior. Although the notion of the intrinsic qualities (aesthetic) of the work itself are called into question by the *parergon*, the work of the frame has a critical bearing on the manner in which art objects can be theorised. The *parergonal* activity produces the very concept of the intrinsic art object, set against a ground, or extrinsic background. The *parergon* thus generates difference, it is the articulator of difference and therefore demands that the objects of visual practice be read as being part of a differential field. Or indeed, art objects are the products of a differential field.

> The frame then is at the limit or on the border separating the intrinsic from the extrinsic, and at the same time the intrinsic (the *ergon*) is precisely *what is framed*. It follows from this that there can be no theory of the art object as such, but only a theory of the whole field

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[271] Ibid.
[272] Niall Lucy citing Jacques Derrida in *A Derrida Dictionary* Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004 p.143

> (what Derrida sometimes calls the general text) in which the art object is produced or constituted. And that field opens out from somewhere in the in-between, between the *ergon* and the *parergon*.[273]

Whilst in the above quote Niall Lucy characterises the in-between as "somewhere" between the *ergon* and the *parergon*, I consider the *parergon* to *articulate* the in-between. It is the producer of the oppositional difference between intrinsic and extrinsic: functionally akin to *différance* itself. For, as Derrida writes, "[t]he frame is in no case a background …but neither is its thickness as margin a figure."[274]

Photographic framing (the practice referred to in the previous chapter as one of elision, selection and inclusion) is a method by which the photographer articulates a differential field, which is the product/residue (or one might say *trace*) of practice. Derrida asks that those engaged in theory, practice or *theoretical practice*, consider the frame and its role in the generation and articulation of difference. That which is intrinsic and extrinsic to the artwork is unthinkable and inarticulable in the absence of the productive power of *parergonality*.

> No "theory", no "practice," no "theoretical practice" can intervene effectively in this field if it does not weigh up and bear on the frame, which is the decisive structure of what is at stake, at the invisible limit to (between) the interiority of meaning (put under shelter by the whole hermeneuticist, semioticist, phenomenologicalist, and formalist tradition) *and* (to) all the empiricisms of the extrinsic which, incapable of either seeing or reading, miss the question completely.[275]

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[273] Niall Lucy *A Derrida Dictionary* Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004 p.54
[274] Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting,* Bennington and Ian McLeod (trans) Chicago Ill.; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987 p.61
[275] Ibid.

The practice of photography extends beyond making artworks to a range of cultural practices which rely heavily upon what is commonly regarded to be photography's evidentiary power. Whilst it is not my intention to debate the contested indexical account of photography here, let it suffice to say that there are theorists for whom the evidentiary power of photography is a matter of cultural convention. The photographic convention of bearing witness to a forensic scene, for example the use of scenes of crime photography as evidence in court, can be considered in terms of what Derrida describes above as the empiricism of the extrinsic: a photographic practice which is valued for its capacity to generate or capture evidence. This way of figuring photography does not allow any such thing as the photographically equivocal or uncertainty. The Law, consistent with its demands, requires photography to play a monistic role in establishing the truth of the matter. Therefore, photography as a "theoretical practice," if we take theory (from *theoros*) to be speculative, is a far more pluralistic practice, one which is open to speculation, which pays attention to the effects of the instrumentality of the medium and the manipulations of the method. Such as, the example at hand, which is the need to pay attention to the effect of the frame as the producer of that which is intrinsic and extrinsic to the artwork.

At the very start of this thesis, we looked at landscape and the possible theoretical articulations of the word and the idea, which might be productive in the furtherance of this study. Through the analysis of the ideas of a number of thinkers, we came to the conclusion that landscape is a synthetic space, the most apposite and resonant formulation of a definition regarding landscape, which was found in J.B. Jackson's *Understanding the Vernacular Landscape*. As a result of this and an

investigation into Roland Barthes' writings, it became possible to write about the landscape in terms of text. Although in itself it is not entirely novel, the conception of landscape as text is useful in terms of facilitating a break from the notion of landscape as a view or a picture. Superficially at least, this frees photography from the role of optical instrument which pictures the landscape as view. Some might wish to argue that this does not alter the fact that the camera is a picturing device, arguably it changes the dynamic from picturing or re-picturing the view, to picturing the text. However, we have gone on to argue that photographic practice is *grammatological*, therefore the relationship between photography-as-writing and the landscape as text (landtext) might be described as intertextual: intertextuality is the in-between. However, to say that there is a relation *between* them implies, to a certain extent, a separation between these texts which needs to be traversed. It is this in-between-ness which now requires further consideration and, in order to begin this process, I firstly intend to investigate the notion of intertextuality a little further.

IV Intertextuality

During the first chapter, we looked at a piece of writing by Roland Barthes entitled 'From Work to Text', in which Barthes begins to differentiate the work (a piece of writing which sustains monistic readings) from Text, which by its nature is pluralistic and mobile:

> The work has nothing disturbing for any monistic philosophy…for such a philosophy, plural is Evil. Against the work, therefore, the text could

> well take as its motto the words of the man possessed by demons (Mark 5:9): 'My name is Legion: for we are many.'[276]

The Text therefore resists monistic, singular readings and sets off a chain of signifiers. The methodological field of the Text, as Barthes describes it, is a network or mesh or matrix of signifiers in which the signified is constantly disrupted and deferred. Barthes argues that Text can only be text in difference: its reading is durational, that is, it takes place over time[277] and it is re-written each time it is read (by one or more readers). In its pluralistic vein, the text is *scriptable* rather than *lisable*, writerly as opposed to readerly, or readable. It generates a plurality of meaning rather than being readable for a fixed singular and stable meaning.

In 'From Work to Text' Barthes draws a clear distinction between the work and the text. For Barthes, it is not a matter of the modernity of the writing or indeed its quality which determines it as either work or text. He writes:

> It would be futile to try to separate out materially works from texts. In particular, the tendency must be avoided to say that the work is classic, the text is avant-garde…there may be 'text' in a very ancient work, while many products of contemporary literature are in no way texts.[278]

Thus, for Barthes, although the determining factor which defines the difference between work and text is clearly not historical, there is,

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[276] Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text' in *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds), Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1998 p. 944

[277] In this sense text is time based, it is diachronic as opposed to synchronic.

[278] Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text' in *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds), Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1998 p.942

nonetheless a categorical distinction between a work and text: it is the writing's resistance to monistic readings which characterises text as such. Having said this, there also appears to be an ontological difference between work and text in Barthes' argument. We might say that work has an ontology, whereas Text does not, indeed it cannot. For Barthes, the work is quite clearly material: "the work is a fragment of substance, occupying part of the space of books"[279], on the other hand he describes text as a methodological *field*. We might say that work is a product bound in material whereas text practices an openness, articulates a field of differences, of other texts, which activates a new discursive space.

Thus for Barthes, the work exemplifies the classical conception of a text, which derives its meaning from the Latin *texere*, to weave. The classical text is thus woven together, enmeshed, bound, the inseparable nature of text and context is described in their shared etymology: context meaning *woven together*. The modern conception of text as discussed by Barthes is unbound, loosely woven, the interstitial spaces open other possibilities for connectivity: a thread may easily pass through them providing a link to another fabric or text. It could be said that the work is synchronic, whilst text is diachronic: text is tied, untied and retied through time.

> the Text is experienced only in an activity of production. It follows that the Text cannot stop (for example of the library shelf); its constitutive movement is that of cutting across[280]

Derrida differs from Barthes insofar as his writing overturns the very notion of the stable, classical text. The question for Barthes is ontological, the work can be held in the hand, it can be commanded. However, for

[279] Ibid.
[280] Ibid.

Derrida, the matter of textuality turns on the way in which in which the work is read. Under Derrida's deconstructive reading, there would be no such distinction between work and text: all writing is product and process i.e. *écriture*. Thus all writing is text because every word, or signifier, sets off different associations dependent upon the context, which the author can only attempt to regulate.[281]

In his deconstructive reading of Plato's *Phaedrus*, entitled 'Plato's Pharmacy,' Derrida unravels the binary distinctions within the work, most notably the section on writing's inferiority to speech. He does this by demonstrating the reliance of meaning on contextualisation and interpretation. That is to say, terms such as *pharmakon*, do not have one fixed meaning but are in themselves multi-valent or undecidable. The meaning of *pharmakon* is determined by its contextual utilisation within the relational structure of language: *pharmakon* means either poison or cure. Derrida argues that Plato opens the *Phaedrus* with the myth of *Pharmacia* and *Oreithya* in order to associate the later section on the inferiority of the written word to the spoken word with the *poison* of Pharmacia. This has the purpose of ascribing to writing the character or role of poison or marking writing as the negative term in the binary opposition.

> This brief evocation of Pharmacia at the beginning of the *Phaedrus* – is it an accident?…Let us in any case retain this: that a little spot, a little stitch or mesh (*macula*) woven into the back of the canvas, marks out

[281] This is not to say that all texts are deconstructive. Deconstruction, for Derrida, is a way of reading. This is can be differentiated with Paul de Man's understanding of Deconstruction which states that all texts are deconstructive. Irene E. Harvey writes on this subject in 'The *Différance* Between Derrida and de Man' *The Textual Sublime: Deconstruction and its Differences The Textual Sublime: Deconstruction and its Differences* Hugh J. Silverman and Gary E. Aylesworth (eds) Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York, 1990 pp.73-86

> for the entire dialogue the scene where that *virgin* was cast into the abyss, surprised by death *while playing with Pharmacia*. Pharmacia (*Pharmakeia*) is also common noun signifying the administration of the *pharmakon*, the drug: the medicine and/or poison.[282]

Writing as *pharmakon* seduces Socrates to leave the safety of the interior of the city (the Republic), the place of men of learning. He enters nature, outside the city, the place of trees and fields which, according to Plato, would teach Socrates nothing. Derrida calls this an *exodus* which takes Socrates "out of himself".[283]

> the *pharmakon* makes one stray from one's general, natural, habitual paths and laws. Here it takes Socrates out of his proper place and off his customary track…The leaves of writing act as a *pharmakon* to push or attract out of the city the one who never wanted to get out, even at the end, to escape the hemlock.[284]

The intoxication of Socrates in the presence of the written speech causes him to act out of character, to make Socrates think and behave differently than usual. The sheaves of paper, speech *written* rather than spoken, corrupt him. Derrida demonstrates that there is a contradictory logic found in the *Phaedrus*: not only does Plato equate writing with poison rather than cure (through his authorial determination), he goes on to equate speech with another kind of writing "the legitimate brother of written speech"[285] as opposed to graphic writing which is the bastard brother, or bastard son of *logos*. Written speech according to Plato is but

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[282] Jacques Derrida 'Plato's Pharmacy' *Dissemination* Barbara Johnson (trans) New York; London: Continuum, 2004 p.75
[283] Ibid. p.76
[284] Ibid.
[285] Plato *The Phaedrus; and, The seventh and eighth letters* Walter Hamilton (trans) Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973 p. 98

the shadow of living speech, which is the kind of writing that is "written on the soul of the hearer together with understanding"[286].

The indecidability of *pharmakon* as either poison or cure is the device which Derrida uses to reveal the contradictory logic of the binary oppositions in Plato's argument regarding the inferiority of writing in relation to speech. *Pharmakon* reveals the play of differences within Plato's text, demonstrating the textuality of the text. The impossibility of a transparent translation of the text is heralded by this word: in *translation*, one text is transformed by another. This is significant insofar as Derrida argues, as we have already seen, that there is no independently accessible reality outside of the text i.e. accessible to us without an interpretative experience: reality, truth, presence (etc.) are posited by textuality. It is Derrida's aim to convince us that Plato's text is no more than a play of textuality and that once this play of textuality is set in motion, it continues indefinitely. Once Derrida disrupts the authority of the text by undermining and unpicking its guiding threads, we will see that the Platonic dialogue is not an exemplar of a gradually disclosed truth through careful dialectic. Rather it is a tissue of contradiction and opposition woven by Plato to communicate his ideas (in the voice of Socrates). This play of textuality effectively undoes the fabric of Plato's argument. Derrida's deconstruction of the binary oppositions in Plato's text is analysed by James Powell in the form the text as a woven tapestry.

> Socrates' retelling of the myth [is] woven of a series of binary opposites, and so is the dialogue:
>
> speech/writing

[286] Ibid.

philosopher/sophist
citizen/scapegoat
good seed/bad seed

> The "good" member of each pair [on the left] is like the part of the thread that shows in the tapestry. While the marginalized is like the part of the thread that lies below the surface of the design, repressed.[287]

Plato's authorial regulation of context through choice of meaning of determinate terms (the proper reading) guides the reader to a particular understanding of writing. This is like the patent or manifest face of a tapestry, the woven stitch which shows, rather than that which is hidden or repressed in the backing. Derrida's point could be understood as the 'proper reading' being brought forward by the author but the back of the tapestry, the subtext, is there to be revealed by a deconstructive reading. This may even be extended to the proper reading being built or overlaid upon the subtext. The proper reading is reliant upon the suppression of the subtext or alternative reading.

As we discussed previously, Barthes defines Text as a methodological field and in so doing, expands Text to encompass the intertextual. This is to say, the mobile and diachronic nature of Text, as Barthes understands it, is intertextuality itself:

> [Barthes'] theory of the text, therefore, involves a theory of intertextuality, since the text not only sets going a plurality of meanings but is also woven out of numerous discourses and spun from already existent meaning. The text's plurality is neither wholly an 'inside' or an

[287] James Powell *Derrida For Beginners* New York: Writers and Readers, c1997 p.73

> 'outside', since the text itself is not a unified, isolated object upon which an 'inside' and an 'outside' can be fixed.[288]

Text is thus a non-systemic structure of plurality and reference. The thread from which the fabric of the text is woven is garnered from a range of sources: it is rewoven, bringing with it references and meaning unpicked from a range of differing *contexts*. However, it would be wrong to think of intertextuality as simply a way of making reference to the source of a given text. This would be, according to Barthes, to fall prey to 'the myth of filiation', the idea that intertextuality is a means by which the reader tracks the reference of one text to another. For Barthes, each text is read (in a writerly manner) and held in relation to every other text. He characterises the relation between texts as intertextual. The text is

> woven with citations, references, echoes, cultural languages (what language is not?), antecedent or contemporary, which cut across it through and through in a vast stereophony. The intertextual in which every text is held, it itself being the text-between of another text, is not to be confused with some origin of the text: to try to find the 'sources,' the 'influences' of a work, is to fall in with the myth of filiation; the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet *already read*: they are quotations without inverted commas.[289]

Thus the intertextual is not the search for, or the mapping of the filiation or genesis of the work. According to Barthes, the citations of the text do not appear in inverted commas, yet they are already read. That is to say, language is a shared system which contains already existing metaphors,

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[288] Graham Allen *Intertextuality* London: Routledge, 2000 p. 67
[289] Ibid.

allusions turns of phrase which are non-original. Barthes' argument regarding the referential nature of Text is a recognition of this. The Text therefore eschews the authorial, the intertext does not describe the origin of the work or the Text. It is the invisible network of relations between texts: the tissue into which each textual relation is woven.

Barthes' expanded theory of the text which includes intertextuality in its very constitution, has a significant impact upon the conception of authorship. In 'The Death of the Author' Barthes discusses the emergence of the Author as

> a modern figure, a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation, it discovered the prestige of the individual[290]

Under this conception, the Author is thought to be the owner of language, a sovereign individual who means, in a monological/monistic sense. Barthes' theory of the text impacts profoundly upon this position. He writes of Stephane Mallarmé that

> For him, for us too, it is language which speaks, not the author; to write is, through a prerequisite impersonality (not at all to be confused with the castrating objectivity of the realist novelist), to reach that point where only language acts, 'performs', and not 'me'.[291]

The erasure of the author thus results in language speaking rather than the authorial voice of the text, writing is a practice which facilitiates the

[290] Roland Barthes *Image Music Text* Stephen Heath (trans and selected) London: Fontana Press, 1977 pp. 142-143
[291] Ibid. p.143

performativity of language. The act, or performance of language results in an open text: *scriptable* rather than *lisable*.

Thus the origin of the text is not the author, as classical writing would have it. Rather, the unity or meaningful integrity of the text lies with the reader. In this sense the reader is the space of intertextuality, to borrow terminology used by Foucault to describe the book, "a node within a network"[292], the reader synthesises the text. But for every reader, there is a new text, a new set of relations. Barthes writes:

> The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal: the reader is without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that someone who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted.[293]

It would be wholly appropriate to cast myself (as a photographic practitioner) as reader in relation to working with the landscape as text. I have long had the sense that in selecting locations to photograph I am reading the land for the residual markers of human intervention. The nature of those interventions does not necessarily interest me: I find the round mark left on a field where cows have been fed as compelling as the remnants of a Uist wheelhouse. The words of George Tice come to mind:

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[292] Michel Foucault cited by Daniel Chandler in *Semiotics: the basics* 2nd edition, New York; Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2007 p. 201
[293] Roland Barthes *Image Music Text* Stephen Heath (trans and selected) London: Fontana Press, 1977 p.148

> As I progressed further with my project, it became obvious that it was really unimportant where I chose to photograph. The particular place simply provided an excuse to produce work…you can only see what you are ready to see[294]

Thinking through what Barthes writes in relation to the reader as the space of the text's unity has an interesting bearing on my thinking as a practitioner as I play the role of *both* reader and writer. As reader of the landtext I am that someone who "holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted."[295] Therefore, as I cast myself as reader of the landtext, I cannot simultaneously occupy the position of author of the photographs which the camera produces. Writing (*écriture*) is the place of the loss of ego, which Barthes refers to as

> The reader of the Text may be compared to someone at a loose end (someone slackened off from any imaginary)[296]

The text acts upon the reader: through the medium of photography, it is the language of the landtext which performs. But photography as writing (photowriting) or grammatology does not simply come to be without light. The gram of photography is photochemical: light is *inscribed* in silver.

V Light, the touch of the intertext

Here we come, in a sense, to the ultimate connectivity or entanglement of photography. The photograph as a nexus of landtext, photowriting

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[294] George Tice cited by Susan Sontag *On Photography* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002 p.197
[295] Roland Barthes *Image Music Text* Stephen Heath (trans and selected) London: Fontana Press, 1977 p.148
[296] Roland Barthes 'From Work to Text' in *Art in Theory: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds), Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1998 p.943

and light. And perhaps we might say, it is light which enables landscape as text and photography as writing to come to be and ultimately it draws its line between both. I return to the notion that photography is a gesture of transformation: the language of the world is transformed by photography and *vice versa*. In fact, it is light which enables this to take place and therefore photography may play the role of the gesture but it is light which is the material of transformation. Light is the condition under which that transformation takes place. Light is the connective tissue, and as such, we might conjecture that it is the material of the intertextual. Thinking of light in these terms should help us to come to an understanding of the relationship between landtext and photowriting.

If we remind ourselves that it is important to avoid the myth of filiation, we should be able to situate intertextuality as distinct from notions of postmodern *pastiche*, that is to say, it is neither a knowing visual or literary reference to another work, nor is it the reader's ability to trace the influences in a text (either linguistic or visual). Although many versions of intertextuality, most notably in cinema theory, seek out the intentioned reference of one work to another, this goes against Barthes' and Kristeva's usage of the term. Intertextuality

> was originally introduced by Kristeva and met with immediate success; it has since been much used and abused on both sides of the Atlantic. The concept, however, has been generally misunderstood. It has nothing to do with matters of influence by one writer upon another, or with the sources of a literary work; it does, on the other hand, involve components of a *textual system* such as the novel, for instance. It is defined in *La Révolution du langue poétique* as the transposition of one or more *systems* of signs into one another, accompanied by a new articulation of the ennunciative and

> denotative position. Any SIGNIFYING PRACTICE (*q.v.*) is a field (in the sense of space traversed by lines of force) in which various signifying systems undergo such a transposition.[297]

I would like to now consider landtext and *photogrammatology* as textual systems which relate to one another: they are tied together. As we have already seen, Derrida argues that in translation, one language transforms another and this has informed my position regarding the transformative nature of the photographic gesture. The landtext is transformed, or to use Roudiez's term, transposed, by *photogrammatology*: the field, the signifiying landscape, is transposed into a different field, the signifying practice of photography. I believe that it is light which holds the key to understanding the relationship between the textual systems above. I begin to wonder whether light is the true in-between of the photographic; does light behave intertextually? Is light a line of force drawn between these two texts?

In *Textures of Light*, Cathryn Vasseleu investigates the relationship between vision and touch in the philosophy of Irigaray, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty. In the introduction to 'True Light' she describes light as a texture. In describing light in this way, Vasseleu is presenting the idea of light as both natural and historically informed. Thinking or taking light to be a texture means that

> light is not a transparent medium linking sight and visibility. It is not appropriate to think of light as a texture either perspectivally or as a thing, or as a medium which is separable from things. In its texture,

[297] Leon S. Roudiez, *Desire in Language: a semiotic approach to literature and art,* Julia Kristeva, Leon S. Roudiez (ed), Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (trans), Oxford: Blackwell, c1980 p.15

> light is a fabrication, a surface of depth that also spills over and passes through the interstices of the fabric. The dichotomy between the visible and the invisible is itself a framing of photology that gives light its texture. As a texture, the naturalness of light cannot be divorced from its historical and embodied circumstances. It is neither visible nor invisible, neither metaphoric nor metaphysical. It is both the language and material of visual practices, or the invisible interweaving of differences which form the fabric of the visible.[298]

So, for Vasseleu, light is not simply a transparent connection between the sense of sight and visibility (the capacity to be seen), nor is it a medium which makes things visible. Light is more complex than simply an object or medium which exists independently of things. For Vasseleu, it is a construction which penetrates that which is constructed and holds it in relation to other things and ideas. Light is neither visible nor invisible, that is, it does not play a role in the binary opposition either/or, on/off. Light is indeterminate, like *pharmakon*, it articulates the difference of itself: it can be liminal as the states of dawn and dusk would suggest. Vasseleu argues that light is both language and material, it is an intertwining of the visible and the ideal, which conflates vision and touch, insisting upon the visual as a space of proximity rather than a space of distance:

> The distance and space for reflection and insight that comes with vision through the mediation of light is lost as the sense of sight passes to the sense of touch. At the point of light's contact with the eye, the objectivity of the visual standpoint becomes a perception of the presence of difference[299]

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[298] Cathryn Vasseleu *Textures of Light: Vision and touch in Irigaray, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty* Abingdon Oxon: Routledge, 2005 p.12
[299] Ibid.

Thus vision and touch are not placed in a hierarchy in the philosophy of Irigaray. Rather, vision is not possible without touch, specifically the touch of light. The texture or tactility of light is not simply material, that is, a physical touch, but a texture.

Landscape(s) of difference: 1, Gina Wall

The "invisible interweaving of differences"[300] which open before the touch of the eye are differences that can be seen and thought. The differences which penetrate the eye are both material and ideal.

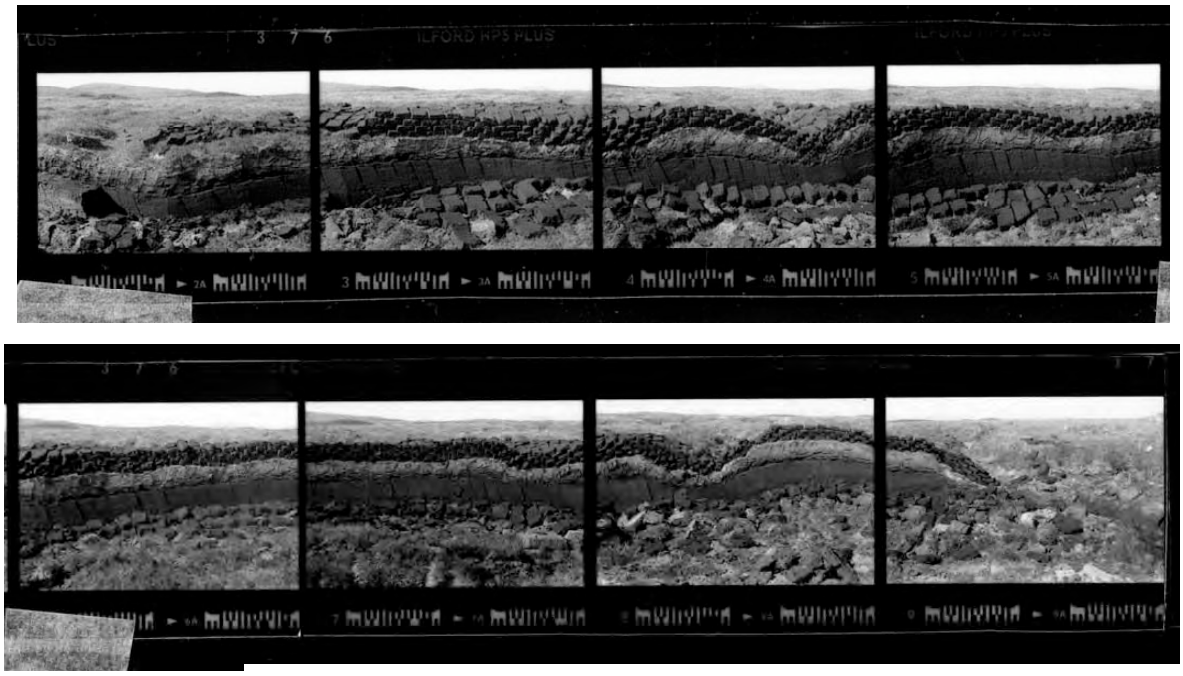
> tactility is an essential aspect of light's texture, where texture refers not only to the feeling of a fabric to the touch, or the grasping of its qualities, but also to the hinges or points of contact which constitute the interweaving of the material and ideal strands of the field of vision.[301]

If we think this through in terms of the photographic as *physis in différance*, that is to say, photography as a field of difference (a *grammatology*), the camera acts as a point of contact, a touch which both punctures and replicates the fabric of the world, the photographic intervention produces a text which is woven into a new field of textuality, a textual space. Thus the visual texture produced by the camera in the form of a photograph connects or *hinges* the sensible and the intelligible. The lens/camera is neither inside nor outside, both inside and outside of the world: it is a means by which this difference is structured and simultaneously erased.

The photographic production of text, a new field of textuality, is explored in a work in progress entitled *Tosg/Tusk*. This is a small concertina book work which investigates the nexus between landscape, photograph, text, articulated by light. The photographic components of the piece were shot in North Uist over successive seasons. It was here that I felt the

[300] Ibid.
[301] Ibid.

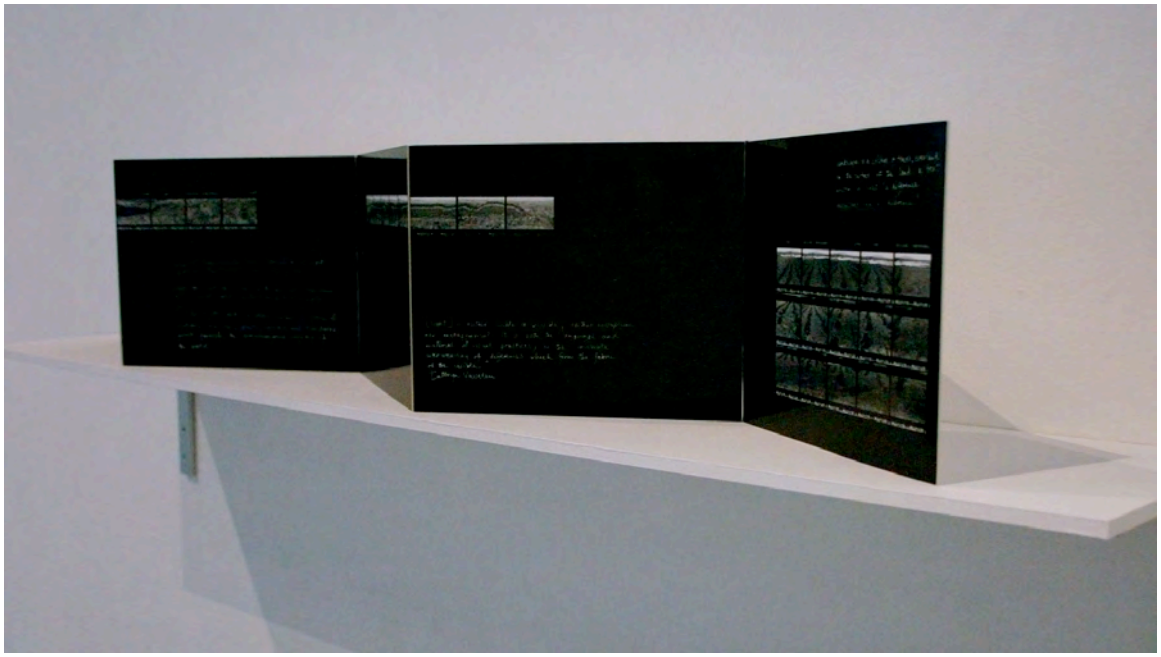
resonance of the landtext, in Barthes' words "repeatable only as difference."[302]



Tosg/Tusk (work in progress), Gina Wall

Parts of the work are constructed like textile: the images were woven as I walked over the landscape. The upright of the frames formed the warp and the images themselves, the weft. The surface of the landscape was reconstructed, remade. The light, low on the landscape throws the tactility of the landtext into sharp relief. The peat banks, cut and recut, incise and mark the land. Under the light, the Braille of the landscape touches the eye and the photographic film.

[302] Roland Barthes 'From Work to Text' in *Art in Theory: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds), Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1998 p.944



Tosg/Tusk (work in progress), Gina Wall

The manner in which Vasseleu calls into question light as the link between sight and visibility undermines Roland Barthes' point, made in *Camera Lucida*, regarding the photographic emanation of the subject. If we recall, he argues that we are touched by the subject's "treasury of rays"[303]. According to Vasseleu's observation that light is an imbrication of the visual and the tactile, the delayed rays held in the Barthesean Photograph are not simply the transparent medium which facilitates sight. Rather, the trapped, cemented light in the photograph is an embodiment of the sensible *and* the intelligible. The photograph, considered as hinge, becomes a physical embodiment of the interwoven texture of light. The landtext, *photogrammatology* and textural light could be said to be held in an intertextual relationship in the photographic image. We might even go as far as to say that the photograph, echoing Barthes' words about the reader cited earlier, is the space in which all of the silent citations of the text are inscribed. It is a field in which the traces of these inscriptive practices are brought together, the traces constituting the field itself. The

[303] Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* Richard Howard (trans), London: Vintage, 2000 p.82

space between, the methodological field, invites the reader, with each viewing, into an open-ended space of signification. In this sense, these photographic images can be considered to be woven with the texture of light.

VI Concluding remarks

The idea that photography is a gesture of transformation was introduced at the outset of this chapter. Subsequent argumentation has set out to show that this gesture is *grammatological*: that the world inscribed photographically is a field of difference(s): differed and deferred, laid down in salts of silver. Photography neither presents nor represents but inscribes the world differentially. Photographs are sameness in difference and thinking photography in general as a system which produces difference is to consider it to be *grammatological*. Indeed, the pseudo-presence of the photograph is an effect of *grammatology*. Therefore, photography's gesture of transformation is one of *writing*: photography writes the world.

During this chapter we have also explored Derrida's deconstruction of the binary opposition inside/outside which he undertakes in a reading of Kant's ideas about the frame, or *parergon*. The supplementary necessity of the extrinsic to the purity and unity of the intrinsic, causes Derrida to argue that there is an originary lack in the artwork. Thus Derrida reveals a contradictory logic at play in Kant's understanding of the *parergon* as a kind of hybrid which brings the outside into the inside, in order to constitute it as inside. Therefore, Derrida asks us to consider the binary opposition inside/outside as indeterminate products of parergonality: they are the very function of the frame. We also explored the frame in

connection with Krauss' ideas regarding the syntax of the image, the spacing and deferral of the photographic sign is facilitated, in part, by the differencing of the lens and in part, by the frame itself, which Krauss has argued is a signifier of signification: the presence of the frame *signifies* writing.

The notion of undecidability was also explored in Derrida's writing on *pharmakon*, which as we saw, means both poison and cure. This Derridean undecidability also problematises the notion that meaning can be contained, intrinsically, within the text. The regulation of the proper reading is reliant upon validation through the appeal to authorial intention, that is to say, which meaning of the term was intended by the author. Thus Derrida argues that the meaning of the text is disseminated in a variety of possible readings, each one of value, even when conflicting readings arise. The text is open to the play of meaning, the text unravels itself under the deconstructive reader's eye.

Esther Leslie has discussed[304] the notion of photographic *analysis* in relation to Benjamin's ideas, drawing our attention to the meaning of analysis, which the *Oxford Dictionary of English* states is the "process of separating something into its constituent elements"[305]. The photographic analysis of the world is therefore, as Leslie has observed, a process of breaking it up. Whilst one might argue that photography does not do this in an *elemental* way, as in say, a chemical analysis: by and large, photography operates at a local level. However, the image is still useful to my point. Etymologically, analysis comes, via Medieval Latin, from Greek *analusis* meaning to loosen up or unloosen. Photographic analysis in the

[304] *InSight: Theorising the Visual, Visualising Theory*, University of Sussex April 2009
[305] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* Ninth Edition Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995 p.55

context of this thesis - photography as photowriting, or as I have termed it, *photogrammatology*, is therefore a process by which images (i.e. texts) are loosened from the world. Following Walter Benjamin we might argue that this loosening of images from the forms the image world. For the sake of this thesis the image world can be purposefully adapted as a textual world.

In order to prevent what might be interpreted as the appearance of a contradictory argument, I would like to clarify that, although this may run counter to Leslie's argument, I do not wish to make the case for the textual world of photographs being broken entirely from the world. As I have argued earlier in this thesis, for me (and indeed others[306]) the photograph is a double, it is not transparent. The subject in the photograph is unloosened from its context in the world and the double, in virtue of the needs, desires, and intentions of the photographer or indeed curator, is stitched together with other doubles to make a body of work. However, these doubles are not free to float wherever they choose, there is a contiguous pivot around which they all turn and that is the touch of light. It is this touch which hinges photographs to the world: the touch of light is the stitch which tacks the photograph to its subject. The photograph is therefore loosened, *slacked off*, rather than broken, from the world.

This loosening of the photograph from the world, a differencing if you will, means that we can begin to think of a photographic analysis of the world in terms of textual analysis. The very textuality of photography is due in part, as we have discovered, to its structural character: the photographic sign is eternally delayed; the frame spaces the image from its referent and

[306] Notably André Bazin, and as we have seen in the previous chapter, Rosalind Krauss

introduces the possibility of the syntax of the photographic image as an oppositional paradigm. However, the textuality of the photographic also owes itself to one of the key materials of photography, which is light. This was explored in relation to the idea that light is the material of the intertext: a kind of connective tissue of *photogrammatology*. The idea that light is an articulation of the intertext will be explored in the final chapter. In addition, the question of the photographic textual world will be considered in relation to practice. I will ask: what is a body of photographic work, is it a trace of practice, or another iteration of the intertextual, or is it relational? I intend to explore the gallery in terms of *parergon*, drawing out some of the possibilities regarding the open-ness of form in Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* and Umberto Eco's *The Open Work*. The notion of textual spaces of practice will be investigated, paying particular attention to the loss of the reader/writer in the text. This will lead me to once again question what it means to photograph the landscape, which will be a question that is now loaded with the inflection of my investigations into the writings of J.B. Jackson, Roland Barthes, Bruno Latour, Jacques Derrida and Rosalind Krauss, to name but a few.

Chapter 5

The photographic textual world: landscape and the textual sublime

I Text and Productivity

II "Relational Form"

III The Gallery and the Space of Practice

IV Loss: '*signifiance*'

V Landscape and the Textual Sublime

VI Concluding remarks

I Text and Productivity

Throughout this thesis a number of ideas relating to landscape, text, photography and writing have been brought together in order to open a space of dialogue which facilitates reflective (in Barthes' words "pensive"[307]) photographic practice. Latterly, we looked at photography through the lens of Derridean *différance*, which has given rise to an understanding of the photograph as product of *différance*, part of a general system of difference; that is, writing. Considered in this way, photography is a practice of difference, and as such, I have called it *photogrammatology*. We have encountered Barthes' argument in favour of the photograph as *presentation*, which was shown to be problematic insofar as it completely ignores or elides the apparatus of photography. However, by rethinking photographic practice in terms of *photogrammatology* we also resist the concept of the photograph as *representation*: the photographic text is the text of a text, it is continually deferred, it cannot *re*present its origin[308]. The photograph does not lead us back to the referent, only towards a differentially inscribed textuality.

At the close of chapter four we considered the idea that the products of photographic analysis constitute an image world which, given our focus on *grammatology*, might be described as textual. If a photographic practice could be considered to be the production of such a textual world, parallels can be drawn between Barthes' notion of textual analysis and photographic analysis. I intend to look at this in more detail later in this final written chapter. Indeed I will also ask how can the textual space

[307] Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* Richard Howard (trans), London: Vintage, 2000 p.38
[308] Although this thesis is written from the perspective of fine art practice, I do not seek to differentiate between photographic practices. For the purposes of this thesis, all photographs are the product of *photogrammatology*.

of practice be described? In thinking the body of photography as text, punctuated by absence, space, the Other, can we relate this in any way to such contemporary art theories as relational aesthetics?

The idea that photographic practitioners are implicated in the production of photographic texts, creates the possibility of talking about Walter Benjamin's image world in terms of a photographic textual world. During this chapter I shall explore the significance of the reader's immersion in the text, both in terms of the practitioner in the landscape and the reader in the photographic textual world of practice. The key reference point for this will be Roland Barthes' ideas concerning the loss of the reader explored in 'Theory of the Text', Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* and Umberto Eco's *The Open Work*. This will also be looked at in terms of the textual sublime, which has relevance to both the reader in the text and indeed the notion, touched on at several points in the thesis, that translation turns the text into something other than itself. Finally, this notion of the textual sublime will be tied to the ideas about landscape presented in this thesis, notably, the role played by light in the re-articulation of the landscape as text, the rewriting of the landscape as the difference of itself. Taking Hugh J. Silverman's conceptualisation of translation as an othering of the text,[309] I will go on to argue that light is the translation of landscape.

We have already demonstrated that the photographic text is produced by *photogrammatology*, and as Barthes would say, text is not "the

[309] This is consistent with Derrida's argument, explored earlier in the thesis, that translation is the regulated transformation of one language by another. However, as we shall see, this differential has interesting consequences for landtext.

product of a labour…but the very theatre of production".[310] Thus I intend to argue that the photographic textual world is the 'site' of productivity. Robert Young writes that:

> Text is produced in the space of the relations between the reader and the written, and that space is the site of a productivity: 'écriture' ('writing')[311].

As we saw in the previous chapter, text/intertext is 'held' in the reader, that is, text is produced in the space between the reader and the written. However, critically for Barthes, the reader who is immersed in the text is "undone".[312] Thus the reader does not command the text as an external observer, but being imbricated within text the reading subject is both made and unmade in its reading, which is a writerly engagement with text.

> criticism…hitherto unanimously placed the emphasis on the finished 'fabric' (the text being a 'veil' behind which the truth, the real message, in a word the 'meaning', to be sought), the current theory of the text turns away from the text as veil and tries to perceive the fabric in its texture, in the interlacing of codes, formulae and signifiers, in the midst of which the subject places himself and is undone, like a spider that comes to dissolve itself in its own web[313]

Thus photographic practice is not concerned with the production of veils or tightly finished fabrics behind which the practitioner's ideas may be

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[310] Roland Barthes 'Theory of the Text' in *Untying the Text: a post-structuralist reader* Robert Young (ed) London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981 p.36
[311] Robert Young *Untying the Text: a post-structuralist reader* Robert Young (ed) London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981 p.31
[312] Roland Barthes 'Theory of the Text' in *Untying the Text: a post-structuralist reader* Robert Young (ed) London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981 p.39
[313] Ibid.

discerned. Rather practice is concerned with the production of an intertextual space into which a reader may enter.

The significance of this loss of the subject will be explored later in the chapter. However we might say that the antithesis viewer/viewed is a product of *différance*. This places the radical difference between the subject looking and the seen object *sous rature*, thus the looker looking becomes part of the landtext in difference.[314] The notion of the landscape as a placeless place in which the reader is undone will also be investigated in due course, with particular reference to the textual sublime, which posits that the sublimity of text is its difference from itself.

> The reader and reading are themselves tropologically elaborated. The reader and the reading (figured as *prosopopeia*) are none other than the text itself – they do not constitute themselves as an alternative voice. They are the sublimity of the text itself.[315]

As we explored in chapter three, Krauss' notion of the photographic doubling, the insertion of space which amounts to an *invagination* of presence, enables us to demonstrate that photographs have a syntax. That is to say, the photographic surface is distended and spaced: the syntagm of the photograph is denaturalised due to the practice of doubling. If we take the paradigmatic figure of photographic practice to be Walter Benjamin's surgeon, the photographer slices images from the text of the world and lays them out in opposition. Thus defined, photography is an intertextual structure which should be considered in terms of the relation *between* groups of images. We might therefore say

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[314] Viewer in *différance* as viewer *differed, differing* view

[315] Hugh J. Silverman, 'Introduction' *The Textual Sublime: Deconstruction and its Differences* Hugh J. Silverman and Gary E. Aylesworth (eds) Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York, 1990 p.xv

that collectively the product of photographic practice also has syntax, bodies of images are syntactically related. However, we should be mindful of what Barthes says if we wish to argue that photography is a productive play, *écriture*: photographs as text would not be the products of a labour but the *very theatre of production*. Photographic *practice-as-writing* generates a syntax, the interstices of which are the in-between of practice: the meaning(s) of practice issue from the play of this space. Photographic practice thought in terms of *photogrammatology* is therefore a space of production. In this regard photographs are less assured of their presentness. They are products of the play of *différance*: the photograph is the trace of a practice, and as we have seen, the trace carries the Other within it.

Thus the syntax of *photogrammatology* is the bringing together of images, the fabrication of a space of practice. We may therefore think of the products of photographic practice as a changing textual field, a changing space: changing in the sense that it is arranged and rearranged in various *loci* (gallery, store, studio) but also subject to re-articulation as it is encountered by different readers. We might describe the syntax and interstice of photography as the photographic nexus held in an intertextual relation. Indeed, the two senses of the word *nexus* mean that it is a useful word to describe the photographic in terms of both nodes and networks. The nexus can be a central or focal point, or indeed it can be a connection or series of connections. Thus the photographic nexus may be the singular photograph or the relation between the photographic pieces, that is a series of threaded connections which link two or more texts.

In the latter context, the nexus is abstract, invisible, it is inscribed in the relations between ideas, or properly speaking, it inscribes relations between ideas, proposing differential readings of practice(s). The nexus, taken to be the weave of a practice, is intangible. Alternatively, one might describe the nexus of any practice as the reader. Rather than thinking the reader as a centralised focal point, as nexus would imply, we can go to the etymology of the word to find that it comes from 'a binding together'. Therefore the notion of the reader bound within the network becomes pertinent to Barthes' understanding of the reader's place in the text. In terms of the photographic nexus, the reader is central to the text only insofar as he is within it. He is bound into the text and, as Barthes argues, in this process is *undone*.

At the close of chapter four we discussed the idea that photographic analysis loosens the subject from the world, fracturing the world and reconstituting it as the image world. However, the notion that light tacks the photograph to its subject posits (a) contiguity between the world of things and the image world. Thus the image world is not a hermetically sealed, self-contained world, a world apart; rather it relies upon contiguity with the world. This is not to say that the relation between image and world is referential, it is, as we have already discussed, intertextual: the touch of light is the connective tissue between texts. The tack, stitch, or *macula* around which photographic images pivot is a fine thread connecting one text to another: the photographic stitch is an intersection.

So in a sense Roland Barthes is right when he argues that the *noeme* of photography is the touch of that-which-has-been, woven in the photograph and brought into here-now. However, it is one thing to say that the timespace of the subject and the timespace of the photograph

are contiguous, but in fact, Barthes makes an entirely different argument when he posits that The Photograph brings his mother to presence. He argues that the spacetimes brought into mutual contact are the there-then and the here-now which are contiguous in virtue of the rays which emanate from the subject. This is much more than a commitment to the indexicality of the photograph, this is a commitment to pure transparency: the photograph is a portal to another time. As I hope to have shown through the critique of Barthes' blindness to the instrumentality of photography, this is an untenable position. The photographic *macula* in fact tacks together a skein of textual possibilities.

In connection with this, we might usefully borrow Julia Kristeva's articulation of Mikhail Bahktin's understanding of the 'word' in poetic language as a productive image. She writes that the word, in literary usage, is

> an *intersection of textual surfaces* rather than a *point* (fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings[316]

Whilst I do not wish to argue that the literary word is simply analogous to a photograph, the notion of the photographic image as an intersection of textual surfaces is useful insofar as it allows for the connotative reference of the photographic image, which as we saw earlier, Barthes describes as myth signification. However, it also opens the possibility of the photograph in space (a gallery, a book, a photograph album) as a player or speaker in a dialogue. The photograph, transposed from one context to another is inflected with varying meanings or resonances as its relation to other images and artefacts changes: images are read in relation to

[316] Julia Kristeva 'Word, Dialogue and Novel' *The Kristeva Reader*, Toril Moi (ed), Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986 p.36

one another; the photograph in a gallery space sets off *a dialogue among several writings*. This conception of the photographic intersection of textual surfaces will shortly be looked at more closely in relation to the reader.

At the close of 'Theory of the Text', Roland Barthes argues that text is mutable, it cannot be fixed: text is indefinable as a form and he writes that we only name it "provisionally"[317]. Barthes invokes Friedrich Nietzsche's call to look beyond the gross form of things in order to understand the eternal mobility of existence. Barthes cites Nietzsche as follows:

> We are not *subtle* enough to perceive the probably absolute *flow* of *becoming*; the *permanent* exists only thanks to our coarse organs which summarise things and reduce them to common levels, when in fact nothing exists in that form. The tree is at each instant a new thing; we assert *form* because we do not grasp the subtlety of an absolute movement.[318]

Thus for Nietzsche, form is humanly constituted simply because we are unable, for lack of subtlety, to grasp the infinite movement of everything: movement and change is absolute. As far as Barthes is concerned, this quote from Nietzsche also illustrates our provisional naming of text. That is to say, it is only the coarseness of our thinking which demands that we name text, but just as the tree at each moment is new, so too is the text. Thus we might say that photographic textuality posits something in excess of the photographic *object*; beyond the ontology of the photograph

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[317] Roland Barthes 'The Theory of the Text' in *Untying the text: a post-structuralist reader* Robert Young (ed) London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981 p.45
[318] Friedrich Nietzsche cited by Roland Barthes 'Theory of the Text' *text: a post-structuralist reader* Robert Young (ed) London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981 p.45

towards a conception of the photographic as the trace of practice. These differential traces of the subject are relational and, in their relationality, mutable. The territory of photographic practice is full of interstitial spaces.

II "Relational Form"

This manner of thinking about artworks as open, never definitively closed, social rather than aesthetic, is consistent with Nicolas Bourriaud's ideas concerning relational aesthetics. Bourriaud writes that relational art is "an art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context rather than the assertion of an independent and *private* symbolic space"[319]. Rather than the artist communicating personal 'truths' or intentions through a private, symbolic, visual language, for Bourriaud the artist works with the social context offered by the gallery, specifically the opportunity for intersubjective encounter. As far as Bourriaud is concerned, the artwork as object is contested by the art of the 1990s, which demands that art be critiqued in new and different ways. Artworks of the 90s are socially engaged (this however does not exclude gallery based practices) and this calls for different ways of theorising, criticising and thinking about the art of this era. The 'old' aesthetic categories of modernism, the notion that aesthetic properties are properties of the art object itself, are questionable. He demands that form itself be reconsidered:

> An artist's artwork thus acquires the status of an ensemble of units to be re-activated by the beholder manipulator. I want to insist on the

[319] Nicolas Bourriaud *Relational Aesthetics* Simon Pleazance and Fronza Woods (trans), Dijon: *les presses du réel*, 2002 p. 14

> instability and the diversity of the concept of "form"…it is not the simple secondary effects of a composition, as the formalistic aesthetic would like to advance, but the principle acting as a trajectory evolving through signs, objects, forms, gestures…The contemporary artwork's form is spreading out from its material form: it is a linking element, a principle of dynamic agglutination.[320]

Bourriaud proposes that the form an artwork takes is unstable and divergent, changing and variable: form for Bourriaud is not fixed but evolutionary; it is not an effect of composition but a relation. The artwork is a collection of units which he argues are "reactivated"[321] by the viewer whom he describes as "beholder manipulator"[322] who, as manipulator is also in some sense the maker. That is to say, in viewing the work, the viewer handles it, brings meaning to it by engaging with it socially. The form that a contemporary artwork takes is therefore not simply allied with its materiality but is implicated in the changing relations within which the material work is sited and interacted with by the participant. Bourriaud articulates the contemporary artwork's form as an *agglutination*: the artwork is glued together[323]. The viewer, or participant, is the means by which the work is agglutinated. "An artwork", writes Bourriaud, "is a dot on a line"[324]. We can also describe an artwork as a knot in a net where

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[320] Ibid. p.20
[321] Ibid.
[322] Ibid.
[323] This also makes the connection between form and text: agglutination is a linguistic term. Saussure writes: "Agglutination occurs when two or more terms originally distinct, but frequently joined together syntagmatically in sentences, merge into a single unit which is either unanalysable or difficult to analyse. Such is the agglutination process: we say 'process' and not 'procedure', since the latter term implies will and intention. But the involuntary nature of agglutination is one of its essential characteristics." *Course in General Linguistics* Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye (eds), Roy Harris (trans), Peru, Ill.: Open Court Classics, 2008 p.175 In this sense we can understand the form of the artwork as process – its form is arrived at involuntarily as it is activated by successive participants.
[324] Nicolas Bourriaud *Relational Aesthetics* Simon Pleazance and Fronza Woods (trans), Dijon: *les presses du réel*, 2002 p.20

the tropes knot, rope and interstitial space are equally important. In short, I would suggest that form for Bourriaud, bears a striking resemblance to the theories of text, which we have recently investigated.

Indeed, for Barthes the grouping of images changes the way in which the work generates meaning. The connotations are no longer generated by individual images but by the body of work, and each time the body can be put together differently.

> Naturally, several photographs can come together to form a sequence…the signifier of connotation is then no longer at the level of any one of the fragments of the sequence but at that – what the linguists would call the suprasegmental level – of the concatenation.[325]

The condition of concatenation, of being linked together, implies that the reading takes place across the body of work, and as the *corpus* is subject to rearrangement, addition, subtraction and so on, the work is necessarily read differentially, even by the artist or photographer themselves.

Just as the interstitial space of text is the space of play, according to Bourriaud, the form of the artwork is also the space of the encounter. He describes the artwork as "social interstice"[326]. It is temporal, not just to be walked through but experienced, that is *lived*:

> [The artwork] is henceforth presented as a period of time to be lived through, like an opening to an unlimited discussion…this system of

[325] Roland Barthes 'The Photographic Message' *Image, Music, Text* Stephen Heath (trans and selected) London: Fontana Press, 1977 p.25
[326] Nicolas Bourriaud *Relational Aesthetics* Simon Pleazance and Fronza Woods (trans), Dijon: *les presses du réel*, 2002 p16

> intensive encounters has ended up producing linked artistic practices: an art form where the substrate is formed by inter-subjectivity, and which takes being-together as a central theme, the "encounter" between beholder and picture, and the collective elaboration of meaning.[327]

Inter-subjectivity is therefore critical to understanding Bourriaud's relational aesthetics. The significance of self-Other relations in the generation of meaning calls into question the notion of the fixed form, and by extension the fixed meaning of the artwork: meaning is produced in the encounter.

The types of work discussed by Bourriaud defy definition in terms of art objects; for example, this would include the work of Rirkrit Tiravanija, an artist whose work borders installation and performance. Whilst artworks of this nature may seem to have little relevance to a photographic practice such as my own, it is this idea of the encounter which is pertinent to our current investigations: the reader *in* the text of practice. However, it is important to point out that for Bourriaud, it is the work itself which is open, rather than our reading of it. Claire Bishop argues that

> The curators promoting this…paradigm…have to a large extent been encouraged to adopt this curatorial modus operandi as a direct reaction to the type of art produced in the 1990s: work that is open ended, interactive, and resistant to closure, often appearing to be "work-in-progress" rather than a completed object. Such work seems to derive from a creative misreading of poststructuralist theory: rather than the interpretations of a work of art being open to continual reassessment, the work of art itself is argued to be in perpetual flux.[328]

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[327] Ibid. p15
[328] Claire Bishop 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics' *October* 110, Fall 2004 p.52

The kind of work championed by these curators resists all notion of the art's objecthood, that is the artwork as a bounded, clearly defined, aesthetic object. Therefore, this poses a problem in terms of defining the *locus* of the artwork, especially in terms of the aesthetic. Indeed, the artwork, considered in terms of Bourriaud's relational aesthetics, is variably intersubjective, it is held in a collective. In this sense, it is open insofar as the constitution of the collective is always changing. However, Bishop's point is that these works *creatively* mistake poststructuralist open-ness in terms of the meaning or interpretation of artworks, for open-ness in their ontology. The artworks do not close because they never physically settle. Bishop goes on to draw the comparison between Umberto Eco's *The Open Work* and Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics.* She argues that Bourriaud misreads Eco's ideas about the open work:

> However, it is Eco's contention that every work of art is potentially "open", since it may produce an unlimited range of possible readings; it is simply the achievement of contemporary art, music, and literature to have foregrounded this fact. Bourriaud misinterprets these arguments by applying them to a specific type of work (those that require literal interaction) and thereby redirects the argument back to artistic intentionality rather than issues of reception.[329]

On this point I would concur with Bishop, Bourriaud's argument is concerned with the defence and articulation of very particular artistic practices which consciously obfuscate the dyadic relation between the artwork and viewer. Indeed Bishop points out in a footnote to this that these artworks could actually close off readings in view of their overt open-ness. That is to say, it could be argued that the work demands that the viewer conform to expected behaviours within the gallery space

[329] Ibid. p.62

when faced with the work. An example of this might be that in case of Tiravanija's work, in which the artist cooks in the gallery and sets up spaces for eating, the viewer is expected to conform to the social norms of eating and socialising. The *specific sociability* of Tiravanija's practice closes rather than opens the work.

The issue at hand parallels our encounter with Barthes and Derrida regarding the tension between work and text. As was previously discussed, for Barthes the question is ontological: the work exists and can be read transparently, therefore Text is ontologically distinct: it is, as we have already seen, a "methodological field"[330] rather than "a fragment of substance"[331]. Bishop's point turns upon this: for Bourriaud, the openness of the work is ontological, for Eco, the openness is in its reading. Just as deconstruction is, for Derrida a way of reading, *the open work* for Eco is the textual possibility of multiple readings and the inexhaustive resources of the text.

III The Gallery and the Space of Practice

Earlier in this chapter we looked at Bahktin's idea that the literary word is intertextual, it is a space, rather than a point of meaning, where textualities, or "textual surfaces"[332] meet. The word too is a nexus which brings together the "writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or the character) and the contemporary or earlier context."[333] Bahktin's conception of the word as a space which sets a dialogue into play has

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[330] Roland Barthes 'From Work to Text' in *Art in Theory1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds), Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1998 p.942
[331] Ibid.
[332] Julia Kristeva 'Word, Dialogue and Novel' *The Kristeva Reader*, Toril Moi (ed), Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986 p.36
[333] Ibid.

fertile resonances with the gallery space. Not simply in terms of its three dimensional space, but the notion that the players in the dialogue are themselves *writings*, or texts. The gallery space, as the space of encounter, brings different writings into play: the viewer and the work are rewritten with each subsequent encounter. This, for Bourriaud constitutes the gallery as a particular kind of social space.

> Art…tightens the space of relations, unlike TV and literature which refer each individual person to his or her space of private consumption, and also unlike theatre and cinema which bring small groups together before specific, unmistakable images. Actually, there is no live comment to be made about what is seen…At an exhibition, on the other hand, even when inert forms are involved, there is the possibility of an immediate discussion, in both senses of the term. I see and perceive, I comment, and I evolve in a unique space and time. Art is the place that produces a specific sociability.[334]

The gallery space is social and relational, even when used by artists working in ways which Bourriaud would not explicitly define as relational, i.e. even when the form is "inert". However, as we have just seen from Bishop's argument, it is not the ontology of the work which makes it open, rather, it is the reading. Considered in these terms, there would be no such thing as fixed form and Bourriaud's contention that the theatre and film presents the audience with images that are incontestable and evident in their meaning is deeply problematic. Notwithstanding the difficulty with Bourriaud's ideas in terms of the "specific sociability" of the gallery, his notion that the gallery is a space of relations is pertinent to this thesis. In addition, Bourriaud's argument that old aesthetic objects are

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[334] Nicolas Bourriaud *Relational Aesthetics* Simon Pleazance and Fronza Woods (trans), Dijon: *les presses du réel*, 2002 pp.15-16

open to question resonates with our enquiry regarding the notion that the aesthetic object is bounded, the question of the putative aesthetic unity of the work. This also relates specifically to the characterisation of photographic images as *new* objects, with their means of production brought into the spotlight. This argument was advanced during chapter two, where we looked at Bruno Latour's *imbroglio* specifically in terms of Vilèm Flusser's writing on photography. The conception of the photograph as an old, bounded object submits to a new object, that is the photograph as the implicated *imbroglio* of the photographic industry.

As we saw in the previous chapter, Jacques Derrida deconstructs the binary opposition inside/outside in Immanuel Kant's writing on the *parergon*. If we recall from our earlier investigations that Kant argued that the *parergon* is "a hybrid of outside and inside…an outside which is called to the inside of the inside in order to constitute it as an inside."[335] The extrinsic, the frame, acts in such a way that it is both inside and outside. Therefore the inside cannot be an inside without the exterior *parergon* to articulate the difference. This lack in the original interior of the work is supplemented by the exterior or *parergon*. Therefore the artwork cannot be pure without this supplement which leads Derrida to argue, as we saw earlier, that

> What constitutes them as *parerga* is not simply their exteriority as a surplus, it is the internal structural link which rivets them to the lack in the interior of the *ergon*.[336]

[335] Immanuel Kant cited by Derrida in *The Truth in Painting* Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod (trans) Chicago Ill.; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987 p.63
[336] Jacques Derrida *The Truth in Painting* Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod (trans) Chicago Ill.; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987 p.59

The supplementary role of the *parergon* therefore problematises the undecidability of the inside/outside distinction. In fact, as we have already discovered, for Derrida there is no pure inside or outside, rather each is the product of *parergonality*. This is pertinent to the debate between Bishop and Bourriaud insofar as it calls into question the closure of any work, even when, what Bourriaud describes as "inert forms"[337] are brought into play. The "specific sociability"[338] of the gallery is significant to all artworks, be they relational (in Bourriaud's understanding) or not and whilst I concur with Bishop in terms of her criticism of the kind of work that Bourriaud champions as relational, there are also problems with her expectation that works should be stable:

> There are many problems with the idea that the work of art is in perpetual flux, not least of which is the difficulty of discerning a work whose identity is wilfully unstable.[339]

The point that Derrida makes in *The Truth in Painting* is that the very notion of a stable, intrinsic artwork is itself reliant upon that which is external to it. Thus the idea of the complete, bounded artwork is therefore *in itself entirely unstable*. Bishop's difficulties in discerning the work's identity point to her need for the work to be present, unified and identifiable, subject to a textual interpretation: this demonstrates a need for closed artworks rather than artworks as text.

In this sense, it would not be inconsistent to consider the possibility that the gallery space, as *parergon*, is in effect constitutive of the work. Now, it is not my intention to argue that the things placed in a gallery are artworks

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[337] Nicolas Bourriaud *Relational Aesthetics* Simon Pleazance and Fronza Woods (trans), Dijon: *les presses du réel*, 2002 p.16
[338] Ibid.
[339] Claire Bishop 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics' *October* Fall 2004 p.52

simply because of their placement in the institutional setting (although there is a precedent for this attitude[340]). However, I would argue that the work is never intrinsically complete, rather, it requires external factors to articulate it. Notably, an artwork in the gallery is a space which articulates textual play: the viewer and the artwork rewrite one another in an ongoing process. *Practice-as-writing* is disseminated in the textual play which takes place in the gallery. In a sense, the work which Bourriaud advances as relational are *new* art objects, tangled networks of instrument, process and product which make the world speak in different ways. Although there is not the space to discuss this in depth here, the problem with Bourriaud's relational aesthetics does not lie in his theoretical paradigm but the work that he chooses to promote and more significantly, as Bishop points out, the work which he chooses to ignore. In short, the problem with his position is that he advocates particular *kinds* of work which are relational.

IV Loss: '*signifiance*'

The notion of writer as *writing* put forward by Bahktin is applicable to the debate about photography since it enables us to differentiate the photographer as writer from the photographer as author. This is useful insofar as the photographer can be thought of as a generator of difference, rather than a creator of aesthetic objects. A player, as Vilèm Flusser put it is (though altogether more cynically) "not *Homo faber* but *Homo ludens*"[341]. Part of the photographic play is the play of the difference of world and image, the otherness of the subject and its image insisted upon by the articulation of the frame. The play of the

[340] This position is taken up by proponents of the Institutional Theory of Art.
[341] Vilèm Flusser *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* Anthony Mathews (trans) London: Reaktion Books, 2006 p.27

photographic, as we saw in previous chapters, is the generative play of spacing. Derrida writes in 'The Double Session' of a letter from Stephane Mallarmé to Maurice Guillemot in which Mallarmé describes himself as a "syntaxer"[342]. The writer arranges words on the white space of the page in such a way as to draw attention to the spaces in language. However, these spaces are not simply absences or the space between letters and words, but generative, thus the activity of spacing is crucial to the productivity of the text.[343]

> Spacing is a concept which also, but not exclusively carries the meaning of productive, positive, generative force. Like dissemination, like différance it carries along with it a *genetic* motif: it is not only the interval, the space constituted between two things…but also spac*ing*, the operation, or in any event, the movement of setting aside. This movement is inseparable from temporalization…and from différance, from the conflicts of force at work in them. It marks what is set aside from itself, what interrupts every self-identity, every punctual assemblage of the self, every self-homogeneity, self-interiority.[344]

Textual production, or the productivity of practice-as-writing in the gallery is set in motion by the photographic syntaxer, on one level in the decisions about layout and the correlation of images, and on another, in the very practice that is *photogrammatology*.

The proposition that the new artwork is akin to a network (of difference) resonates strongly with both Barthes' and Derrida's conception of text. As

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[342] Jacques Derrida citing Stephane Mallarmé in *Dissemination* Barbara Johnson (trans) New York; London: Continuum, 2004 p.194

[343] This conception of the space of the text and Derrida's insistence upon the non-phonetic components of language have been explored visually in a piece of work entitled *Ferdinand Souffle*, see Chapter 6, pp. 281-283, p. 297

[344] Jacques Derrida *Positions* Alan Bass (trans), New York; London: Continuum, 2004 p. 86

we have seen already, text does not close and photographic practice as *photogrammatology* opens textual spaces which the reader is invited to enter. Meanings of text are constructed through playful engagement, however, as we shall discover later, this play is not facile but has important ramifications for the status of the reading subject. In Barthes' later articulation of text ('Theory of the Text') he differentiates between literary semiotics, concerned with the structure of language, and *textual analysis*, concerned with inter-subjective relations of language:

> Julia Kristeva proposed to call textual analysis 'semanalysis'. It was indeed necessary to distinguish the analysis of 'text' (in the sense that we have given to that word) from literary semiotics. The most evident difference is in the reference to psychoanalysis, present in semanalysis, absent from literary semiotics (which merely classifies statements and describes their structural functioning, without concerning itself with the relation between the subject, the signifier and the Other).[345]

Textual analysis, or 'semanalysis' in Kristeva's nomenclature, is not simply the analysis of the material text, which would be the classical understanding of text, but the analysis of the relation between subject/Other/signifier. Thus textual analysis concerns itself with the analysis of the relational space of text. The analysis of text as the interrogation of the intersubjective space of writing is therefore remarkably consistent with Bourriaud's notion of the contemporary artwork as *social interstice*. However, as Bishop has argued, this extends beyond Bourriaud's art of the 90s, to, theoretically at least, *all* artworks. The writer and reader are imbricated within the space of the text, as we have seen from our discussions of landscape as text, the reader of the text does not

[345] Roland Barthes 'Theory of the Text' *Untying the text: a post-structuralist reader* Robert Young (ed) London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981 p. 43

behold it from the outside. Indeed, Barthes states that it is precisely this notion of the reader being outside of the text that textual analysis undermines.

> It is essentially this exteriority which textual analysis puts into question, not at all in the name of the rights of a more or less impressionistic 'subjectivity', but on the grounds of the infinitude of languages…there is no metalanguage (a proposition established by psychoanalysis) and the subject of writing and/or of reading does not have to do with objects (words, statements) but with fields (texts, enunciations).[346]

The reader/writer engaged in textual encounter is, in Barthesean terms, held in language. He is held between the textual surfaces of writing and is 'undone' by them. By this Barthes means to say that the reading/writing subject loses himself in text, in *jouissance*, which for Barthes is a state of ecstatic, erotic bliss.

The reader of the classical text holds the (aesthetic) object (the work) in his hand. He is therefore in a masterful or sovereign relation to the work: central, privileged, *positioned*. The work, for Barthes, is a space of signification. However, he argues, for text, which is productivity rather than product, signification is no longer adequate to describe the manner in which meaning is made. Signification is destabilised and replaced by '*signifiance*', the ceaseless play of signifiers. "*Significance",* writes Barthes, "is the text at work"[347].

> A fortiori, when the text is read (or written) as a mobile play of signifiers, with no possible reference to one or several fixed signifieds, it

[346] Ibid.
[347] Ibid. p.40

> becomes necessary to distinguish between signification, which belongs to the level of the product…and the signifying work, which belongs to the level of production…it is this work that we call 'signifiance'.[348]

The reader enters between the leaves of the textual surfaces of text, into a space of play in which the illusion of the reader as fixed centre is disseminated. We might argue that the photographic address is textual, as we have already explored, the grid images which constitute a significant part of my own practice question the centredness of the subject before the view. The shifts, duplications and elisions suggest a loss of command and a lack of certainty of one's position in front of the work. The subject, worked by the photographic text, is unpositioned. The photographic register acts as a reflecting pool, as we discussed earlier it doubles the subject and splits it at the same time – the originary subject is lost. The onlooker, caught in this landscape of fracture is less assured of their footing.

[348] Ibid. pp. 37-38

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The reader's and the writer's place within the text ensures that it acts upon him: his sense of unified subjecthood can no longer remain intact.

> 'Signifiance'…is thus work, not the work by which the subject (intact and external) might try to master the language…but that radical work (which leaves nothing intact) through which the subject explores how language works him and undoes him as soon as he stops observing it and enters it.[349]

Thus we might think of *practice-as-writing* as a field in which the reader is ensnared. It is a set of relations or forces which he inevitably becomes a part of. Critically, Barthes refers to "the subject of writing and/or reading"[350] to differentiate between the open work of textual analysis and

[349] Ibid. p. 38
[350] Ibid. p.43

the conception of the work "as a closed object placed at a distance from the observer who inspects it from the outside."[351] The subject of writing and/or reading is not the master but is subject to it. Barthes argues that the reader is lost in the place of the text. "He is himself caught in a topology (a science of the places of speaking)."[352] To think photography as a textual space in which the reader finds himself caught, entails that we consider the photographic textual world as a place of making the world speak in divergent ways. Topology is the arrangement or interrelation of (constituent) parts, by extension, the topology or place of the text enmeshes the reader. Barthes' invocation of topology is a useful metaphor as it enables us to think about photographic depictions of landscape in terms of images which make landscape speak in divergent ways: place as a textual relation is multi-vocal and mobile. Images of landscape do not constitute images of place but iterations of place which in *différance* become *placeless*. The textual body of a photographic practice depicting the landscape is a new emplacement of placelessness – a *heterotopia*, or place of difference. The reader, caught in this topology of the placeless is disoriented and lost: subject(ed) to 'signifiance'.

> 'Signifiance' is a process in the course of which the 'subject' of the text, escaping the logic of the *ego-cogito* and engaging with other logics (that of the signifier and that of contradiction), struggles with meaning and is deconstructed ('is lost')[353]

'Signifiance', a word which Robert Young argues has no equivalence in the English language, is the endless play of signification whereby the

[351] Ibid.
[352] Ibid.
[353] Ibid. p. 38

signifier does not correspond to, or close on a fixed signified, but continually refers to another signifier. In the word *signifiance*, Barthes expresses what Jacques Derrida refers to in terms of the sign as "the unity of a heterogeneity"[354], the notion that the signified is never quite mapped to a signifier due to the effect of spacing, or "the discrepant time of a breath".[355] In the space between the signified and the signifier, the signified slips to the position of signifier, thus the continual play of signification consists in a chain of signifiers which disrupts the settling of meaning. For Barthes and Derrida it is '*signifiance*' which precipitates the loss of the reading and writing subject: the conception of the subject as a fixed centre is destabilised.

Signifiance, for Barthes, leads to *jouissance*, the ecstatic pleasure or bliss resulting from the engagement with *scriptable*, writerly text. *Jouissance* is far more significant than *plaisir* (pleasure):

> Perhaps the most important distinction that [Barthes] makes is between *plaisir* and *jouissance*. These terms are among the most difficult to translate. Richard Miller, his translator, substitutes 'pleasure' and 'bliss', but 'bliss' may convey a more metaphysical, mystical form than the bodily sense of *jouissance* that is intended.[356]

Jouissance for Barthes is therefore a bodily pleasure, an erotic, blissful state in which the reader is undone, lost and disoriented. The notion that the reader is in a state of loss is pertinent to our discussion of the

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[354] Jacques Derrida *Of Grammatology* Corrected Edition Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (trans), Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997 p.18
[355] Ibid.
[356] James Duncan and Nancy Duncan 'Ideology and Bliss: The Secret Landscape of Roland Barthes' *Writing Worlds: Discourse, text and metaphor in the representation of landscape* Barnes, Trevor J. and James Duncan (eds), New York; London: Routledge, 1992 p.26

landscape, in which the reader has been set adrift from a centred appraisal of the view, a fixed and certain anchor on the landscape. As we shall see shortly, this loss can have a profound affect upon the reader in landscape. Indeed, Duncan and Duncan write, apropos of Barthes, that "[t]he text of pleasure is the text that 'grants euphoria'. And the text of bliss disorients."[357]

The conception of the placelessness of the photographed landscape, the landscape in dissemination, runs counter, as we might expect, to what Roland Barthes writes about landscape photographs in *Camera Lucida*.

> An old house, a shadowy porch, tiles, a crumbling Arab decoration, a man sitting against the wall, a deserted street, a Mediterranean tree…this old photograph (1854) touches me: it is quite simply *there* that I should like to live…For me, photographs of landscape (urban or country) must be *habitable*, not visitable.[358]

The landscape photograph, for Barthes, quite clearly posits place: a landscape is *there* in the photograph. And in its habitable nature, photographed landscapes are not spectacles, touristic views of special places, but ordinary scenes, commonplaces in which Barthes would like to live. The photographed landscape must have homeliness about it; indeed he goes on to write:

> Looking at these landscapes of predilection, it is as if *I were certain* of having been there or of going there. Now Freud says of the maternal body that "there is no other place of which one can say with so much certainty that one has already been there." Such then would be the

[357] Ibid.
[358] Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* Richard Howard (trans), London: Vintage, 2000 p.38

> essence of the landscape (chosen by desire): *heimlich*, awakening in me the Mother (and never the disturbing Mother).[359]

As far as Barthes is concerned, appealing landscape photographs have a comfort and a certainty about them: they are recognisable and familiar. The body of the landscape is compared with the Freudian certainty of the offspring's issue from the maternal body. Where the landscape of Barthes' "predilection" awakens in him something *heimlich*, the comfort of the son/Mother relationship, the thesis put forward here tends towards the *unheimlich*, the uncanny. The doubling of landscape written throws the viewer into a state of discomfort regarding the parameters of old objects such as view, artwork, subject. Images of the habitable, homely landscape may be the ultimate landscape photograph for Barthes, but for me it is the landtext of blissful disorientation which disseminates the view and beckons the viewer into the changing space practice which is of ultimate interest.

IV Landscape and the Textual Sublime

As we have discovered, it is scriptable or writerly text which precipitates the ecstatic loss of the reading subject. The active participation, that is reading, decentres the reader's sense of self, challenging his or her perceptions of self as a fixed and clearly defined identity:

> The text of *jouissance* is the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomfits, unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological

[359] Ibid. p.39

> assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, and memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language.[360]

This image of the disorientation of the reader engaged with scriptable text has certain resonances with me personally, due to experiences that I have had driving in North Uist. The Uists are widely renowned for their amazing light, which has the capacity to radically transform the landscape. Although one might argue that this is a quality of light in Scotland more generally, which may be indexed to rapidly changing weather conditions, in all probability it is the flatness of the landscape which makes the changes more significant. Neil Gunn writes of Caithness, another geographically flat area, that "There are few places in Scotland where level light from a sinking sun can come across such as great area"[361]. North Uist is also one of those places.

I was driving in North Uist on two different occasions and due to the rapid, although somehow imperceptible, change in light, suddenly and inexplicably I felt totally disoriented, literally *lost*. I was no longer driving on the landscape but in it; through it: due to this change in the light my own sense of place in the world was thrown open to question. I quite literally did not know where I was. This made me wonder: is this an experience which characterises what Barthes talks of in terms of *jouissance*: ecstatic loss. I felt as though I went quite rapidly from being in control of the landscape to having no control whatsoever: the landscape was transformed from being *lisible*, readable, sequential and logical (one in

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[360] Roland Barthes cited by Duncan and Duncan 'Ideology and Bliss: the Secret Landscape of Roland Barthes' *Writing Worlds: Discourse, text and metaphor in the representation of landscape* Barnes, Trevor J. and James Duncan (eds), New York; London: Routledge, 1992 p.26

[361] Neil M. Gunn *Landscape to Light* Dunbeath: Whittles Publishing, 2009 p. 3

which I could orient myself) to being *scriptable*: I was suddenly disoriented, enveloped and aware of its power and scale.

Thus if we are to think about landscape as text and text is Barthesean productivity, landscape is far more than a constructed materiality. If we are to understand landscape as something more than *ergon*, i.e. text, we must reconcile ourselves to the fact that landtext is a product of encounter. Firstly, the landtext needs to be disclosed, then it requires to be read. These actions of disclosure and reading take place in virtue of light and the reader: light and readers need to engage with landscape in order for it to become text. The reader/writer of the text might be a viewer, walker, driver or camera: not an objectifier but articulator. (The camera might therefore be described as a non-bodily articulator.)

In 'The Light of the Sud-Ouest' Barthes makes a direct correlation between the text of the landscape and *light*, he writes:

> I was already "reading" the Sud-Ouest, I covered the text that proceeds from the light of the landscape, from the languor of a day oppressed by the wind from Spain, to a whole type of discourse, social and provincial. For to "read" a country is first of all to perceive it in terms of the body's memory. I believe it is to this vestibule of knowledge and analysis that the writer is assigned: more conscious than competent, conscious of the very interstices of competence.[362]

For Barthes, the text "proceeds" or issues from the light, the light in this sense is a generative metaphor for text. The light of the Sud-Ouest, for Barthes, has a quality of its own: light saturates the landscape, throwing its

[362] Roland Barthes 'The Light of the Sud-Ouest' *Incidents* Richard Howard (trans) Berkeley and Los Angeles, Calif.; Oxford: University of California Press, 1992 p.8

detail into relief. Light's interaction with the landscape is not simply a case of bringing things to visibility. The landscape is not just disclosed under the light, landscape as text is landscape in difference. Indeed Barthes writes:

> I find no other way of saying it: it is a luminous light…illuminating each thing in its difference.[363]

If we recall Vasseleu's words from the previous chapter:

> As a texture, the naturalness of light cannot be divorced from its historical and embodied circumstances…It is both the language and material of visual practices, of the invisible interweaving of differences which form the fabric of the visible.[364]

Thus light itself is not an opposition: separated into the visible or invisible, for Vasseleu, it is neither/nor, it is indeterminate. Light is not difference itself, rather light illuminates difference. It illuminates the textual/textural difference of the land's *scape*, the differences of the shape of the land. In its indeterminable role, light may be considered as a Derridean *brisure*, or hinge: an articulation of otherness of the same; light articulates sameness in difference.

The touch of light opens a space of difference, this space of proximity, opens before the lens of the camera and the lens of the eye:

> At the point of light's contact with the eye, the objectivity of the visual standpoint becomes a perception of the presence of difference[365]

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[363] Ibid. p.5
[364] Cathryn Vasseleu *Textures of Light: Vision and touch in Irigaray, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty* Abingdon Oxon: Routledge, 2005 p.12
[365] Ibid.

The landtext is thus generated by light: light opens the landscape as text, in difference. As Barthes argues, it is the bodily reading of the "inconsequentialities"[366] which enables the reader to access deeper, more significant ideas about the social use of landscape and its political dimension. However, this reading, argues Barthes, is a reading which is undertaken by the body and the memory in the space of the landscape. The "social and provincial discourse" is not only read with the eye but all of the senses:

> Between Nive and Adour…all the objects of a petty commerce mingled there to constitute an inimitable fragrance…it all functioned like the chemical formula of a vanished commerce…or, more exactly, functions today like the formula of that disappearance. By its smell I can detect the actual change of a certain type of consumption[367]

Barthes' reading detects change, the changing text of, in this case, the commerce of the Bayonnaise marketplace: the changing identity of a land. However, as Saussure teaches us, the difference cannot be detected, the marketplace is differed from itself: the formula of the disappearance of certain trading practices is written in Barthes' memory.

However, in thinking about the landtext opening under the light, we are in danger of re-inscribing the touch of light as a disclosure, a Heideggerian unveiling. On the contrary, light discloses the landscape's difference from itself: light articulates the *textual sublime*. In order to elaborate the notion that light is the disclosure of the difference of landscape, we might pay

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[366] Roland Barthes 'The Light of the Sud-Ouest' *Incidents* Richard Howard (trans) Berkeley and Los Angeles, Calif.; Oxford: University of California Press, 1992 p.7
[367] Ibid. pp.7-8

attention to what Barbara Johnson writes about text in relation to her deconstructive reading of Barthes' 'S/Z', undertaken in 'Structuralism's Wake':

> A text's difference is not its uniqueness, its special identity. It is the text's way of differing from itself. And this difference is received only in the act of re-reading…Difference…is not what distinguishes one identity from another. It is not a difference between…It is a difference within. Far from constituting the text's unique identity, it is that which subverts the very idea of identity, infinitely deferring the possibility of adding up the sum of the text's part or meanings and reaching a totalised, integrated whole.[368]

The text of the landscape is, as we have already discussed, mobile and part of the mobility of this text is endowed by the play of light. Under the light, the text of the landscape differs from itself, ever changing, ever moving, constantly at odds with itself: landscape is never a "totalised, integrated whole."[369]

Although our current explorations are theoretically remote from traditional notions of the sublime landscape which, in grandeur, wildness or enormity terrifies the viewer, this notion of landscape in difference resonates with the postmodern articulation of the sublime. Although an exhaustive analysis of the sublime is not possible here (if indeed at all), the postmodern sublime is pertinent insofar as our enterprise has been concerned with the indeterminacy of language, especially in translation, Derridean *différance* which ruptures the stability of objective meaning as it defers and delay language. The sublime in postmodern thought

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[368] Barbara Johnson 'Structuralism's Wake' in *Untying the Text: a post-structuralist reader* Robert Young (ed) London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981 p.166
[369] Ibid.

represents "an *aporia*, a gap, or an abyss which marks the inability of language to signify objective meaning."[370] The eternal delay of the sign, the invagination of photographic presence, the landtext in difference, are all suggestive of the *aporia* of the postmodern sublime. Indeed, the notion that the landtext under light is the difference of itself lends credence to an understanding of the shift and change in light on the text of the land as an articulation of, what Hugh J. Silverman describes as the textual sublime. The textual sublime, in this instance is taken to be the condition of the text in difference. In *The Textual Sublime: Deconstruction and its Differences*, differential readings of texts by philosophy and criticism are explored, particularly in relation to deconstruction. Whilst the textual sublime is recontextualised for the purposes of my argument, the significance of the text in difference remains.

> The textual sublime characterizes that space or domain in which the concern for the relations between philosophy and criticism are placed in question and examined in detail. As the text opens itself to what is other than itself, it marks the differential spaces of the text.[371]

The textual sublime is a movement, either through the text in translation or the process of differential reading, which calls into question the bounded nature of text and the notion that its meaning can be exhausted in reading. Silverman goes on to write:

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[370] *Encyclopedia of Postmodernism,* Victor E. Taylor and Charles E. Winquist, New York; London: Routledge, 2001 p.383

[371] Hugh J. Silverman 'Introduction' *The Textual Sublime: Deconstruction and its Differences* Hugh J. Silverman and Gary E. Aylesworth (eds) Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York, 1990 pp.xii-xiii

> Unlike the beautiful, the sublime is without boundaries. The textual sublime puts all claim to rigid limits under a shadow of doubt (among other things, opens the text to generalities)[372]

The textual sublime spills over the boundaries of our vision and opens a space in which the *noeme* of the landscape exceeds that which is before us. As readers of the landscape we are also, like the critic, scholar or philologist

> in language, and he must assume his insertion, however 'rigorous' and 'objective' he may wish to be, into the triple knot of the subject, the signifier, and the Other – an insertion which writing (the text) fully accomplishes, without having recourse to the hypocritical distance of a fallacious metalanguage. *The only practice that is founded by the theory of the text is the text itself.*[373]

As we explored earlier, Barthes describes the dissolution of the subject in the text as being like a spider, dissolved in its own web. He writes that, for the lover of neologisms (of whom we can count Barthes as one) the practice or theory of the text may well be defined as a " 'hyphology' (*hyphos* is the fabric, the veil, and the spider's web)."[374] Where Barthes concentrates on the dissolution of the subject (by ecstatic loss) within the text (as opposed to work), Derrida, in his insistence that there is nothing outside of text, posits that the binary oppositions of subject/object are the product of *différance*, or textuality. Thus the subject is produced in the play of textuality. The reader as both subject and object, self and Other, unstable and contingent from the outset, unfolds in the play of language.

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[372] Ibid. p.xii
[373] Roland Barthes 'Theory of the Text' *Untying the text: a post-structuralist reader* Robert Young (ed) London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981 p.44
[374] Ibid. p. 39

The subject photographed is the difference of itself: it is the subject in *différance*. Understandably, the last place we might look to find support for this argument would probably be Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, for as we have seen on successive occasions throughout this thesis, Barthes' ideas, on photography at least, are at odds with those expressed here. However, I believe that Barthes' attempt to identify the genius of all photography by exclusive reference to The Winter Garden Photograph as the model for all photographs, leaves his account open to self-contradiction. In discussing the mortification of the pose, he writes:

> What I want, in short, is that my (mobile) image, buffeted among a thousand shifting photographs, altering with situation and age, should always coincide with my (profound) "self"; but it is the contrary that must be said: "myself" never coincides with my image; for it is the image which is heavy, motionless, stubborn (which is why society sustains it), and "myself" which is light, divided, dispersed; like a bottle imp, "myself" doesn't hold still, giggling in my jar: if only Photography could give me a neutral…body…which signifies nothing![375]

Although Barthes complains that the photograph is frozen and recalcitrant (where elsewhere he calls it weightless and transparent) the photograph's incapacity to be contiguous with his own image (which makes the genius of that special photograph all the more suspect) is altogether consistent with the conception of photographic images as the difference of the world. Like the Barthesean "self", photography as writing is light, divided, it does not hold still. The landscape written is dispersed: the constant change in the land illuminated by light, in the reader (who is

[375] Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* Richard Howard (trans), London: Vintage, 2000 p.12

reading in a writerly fashion), and in the textual spaces opened out by *photogrammatology*, landscape is perpetually differenced.

The intertextual landscape, described by Roland Barthes as "a difference repeatable only as difference"[376] resonates with the idea, drawn from Derrida, of the photgraphic encounter as differencing: a differential relation which, we saw earlier, facilitates the conceptualisation of the photograph as *physis in différance*. The metaphor of landscape as text elucidated by Barthes in terms of a walk in a valley, as we saw in the first chapter, leads him to talk of the experience of being in the landscape in terms of the recognition of half "incidents…[that] come from codes which are known but their combination is unique".[377] The landscape as text takes place in a semalfactive, or momentary, reading. It is an occurrence which photography stills but does not close, for photography, as we have seen, is a *grammatology*, a differencing of the world. The landscape photographed is dispersed, it is subjected to the translation, which is transformational, of *photogrammalogy*.

[376] Roland Barthes 'From Work to Text' in *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds), Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1998 p.944
[377] Ibid. p.943

Landscape(s) of difference 2, Gina Wall

Inside the textual space of practice, the viewer as a textual surface is rewritten: the subject is differenced, *spaced*. If we return to Derrida: spacing "marks what is set aside from itself, what interrupts every self-identity, every punctual assemblage of the self, every self-homogeneity, self interiority"[378]. The reader in the text is undone in Barthesean terms and spaced in Derridean terms. The dissolution of the subject in the text is far from being a negativity, on the contrary, the reader's subjection to the text enables him to be part of textual productivity, a subject "in process" as Kristeva might have it. The reader's immersion in the text, be it landtext or *photogrammatology*, facilitates the erasure and rewrite of those habits of seeing and understanding which we so often take as an indication of who and where we are.

[378] Jacques Derrida *Positions* Alan Bass (trans), New York; London: Continuum, 2004 p.86

VI Concluding remarks

This final written chapter has been concerned with the notion that *practice-as-writing* generates a photographic textual world, a world which is articulated in terms of *grammatology*. The post-structuralist text was investigated further in order to explore Roland Barthes' statement that text is productivity. Taking text to be the site of productivity, a *theatre* of production, *photogrammatology* must therefore be thought of as a space of production. The photograph is a trace of practice generated in the play of *différance*. The place of the reader in this textual space is significant. In our general deconstruction of the view which has taken place throughout this thesis, we have questioned the idea that the view is a kind of picture in tandem with the viewer's centralised and privileged position. We have concluded that the reader is bound into the textual space of practice rather than being central to it: bound in to an intertextual, relational space of meaning in which the 'in-betweenness' of photographic practice is set in play.

This notion of the open form of the artwork was looked at, particularly with respect to Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics*. To think of photographic practice as a textual world, which the reader enters in to resonates strongly with Bourriaud's thesis on *Relational Aesthetics*. However, as we saw from Claire Bishop's critique of this, Bourriaud's relational artworks are ontologically open. Bishop sets this in contradistinction to Umberto Eco's conception of the open work, whose open-ness is not ontological but derives from the reading of a work. Eco's open work is closer to the textuality posited in this thesis in virtue of our

emphasis on reading. In reading, the work is opened, we might say that the *noeme* of the photographic textual world is open-ness.

The textual space into which the reader enters has a bearing on the reading subject. As we saw earlier, for Barthes, the reader engaged with text becomes the subject of reading rather than the reading subject: the reader is subjected to the text. Thus the play of text is not facile, the reader is undone, disseminated, in the text. The manner in which text works the subject is characterised by Barthes as '*signifiance*', the ceaseless play of signifiers. The subject of reading is unravelled by the text if he allows himself to stop observing it (the illusion of beholding it from the outside) and becomes immersed in it.

The idea that text is mobile has enabled us to think about landtext as shifting, mutable, subject to change. This has led to the very concept of place to be questioned. Images of landscape(s) are not necessarily depictions of place but iterations of the difference of place: place in *différance* becomes placeless. Placeless places, places of difference: *heterotopias*.

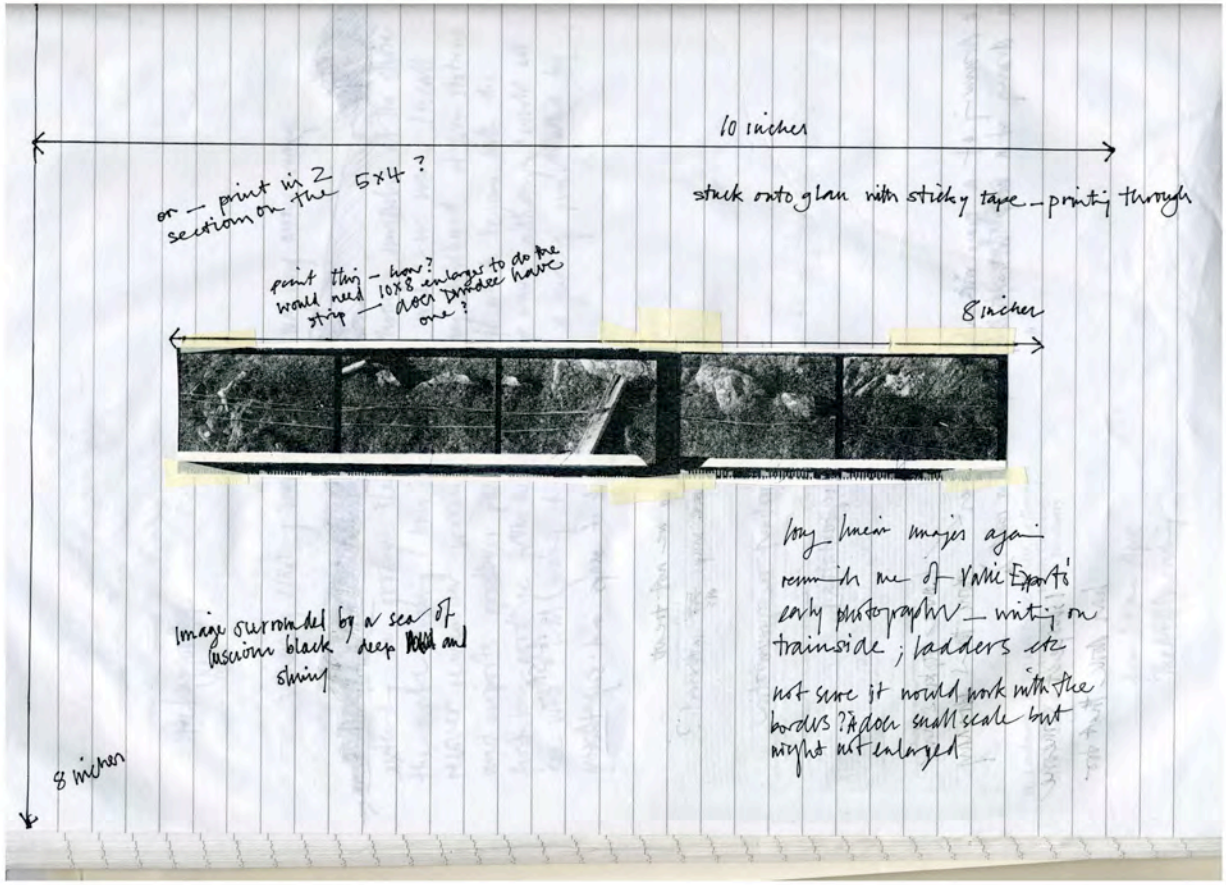
The sense of the placeless in landscape photography is very un-Barthesean insofar as Barthes expects photographed landscapes to represent commonplaces, recognisable and inhabitable landscapes. The landscape is locatable, it is *there* in the photograph. For Barthes, the landscape photographed is *heimlich*, however, for this thesis, with its emphasis on photographic doubling and the photographic dissemination of the view, a less stable reading of landscape is sought, one which tends towards the *unheimlich*, the unsettling or the uncanny. This sense of the familiar becoming strange concurs with my actual experiences in the

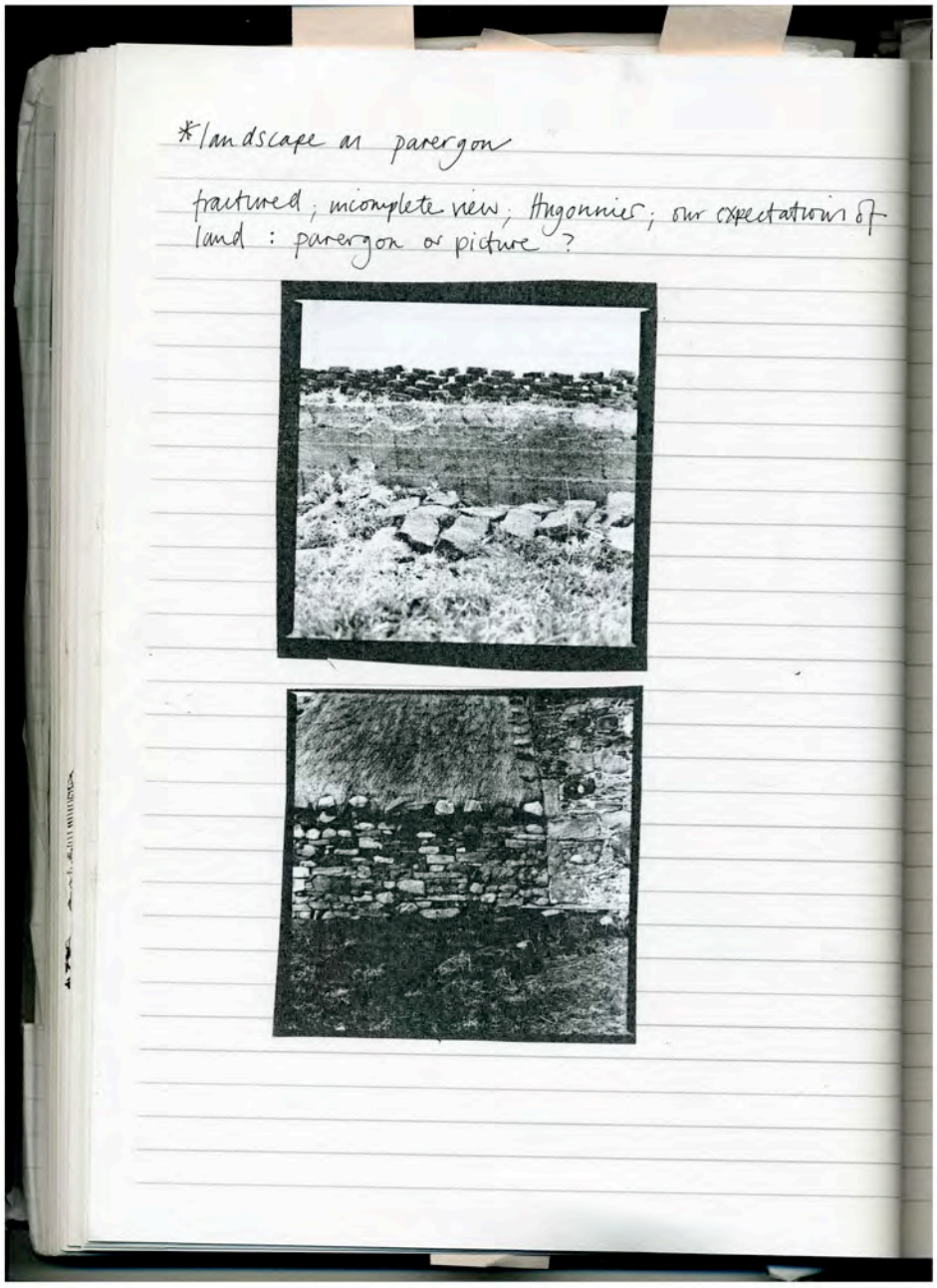
landscape, the instances of my absolute disorientation which came about due to the change in light. These experiences that I had whilst driving in North Uist transformed the landscape from *lisable* to *scriptable*, I found myself subjected to the text of landscape.

Light therefore plays a critical role in the change of landscape. However, as a we have seen from Cathryn Vasseleu's book *Textures of Light*, light is not difference itself, rather it illuminates difference, and critically for this thesis, light illuminates the difference of the same: it articulates sameness in difference. This difference within the text of landscape enables us to think about the landtext in terms of the textual sublime. The textual sublime is the landscape in movement, the landscape is the perpetual difference of itself, it is radically in excess of that which lies before us. Landscape, considered in these terms, is not the shape of a bounded tract of land before us but a boundless space which is both sensible and intelligible: landscape in its fullest sense is both seen and thought.

Chapter 6

Towards Landscapes of Difference


10 inches
or — print in 2 sections on the 5×4 ?
stuck onto glass with sticky tape — printing through
print this — how? would need 10×8 enlarger to do the strip — does Brighton have one ?
8 inches
long linear images again reminds me of Valie Export's early photography — writing on trainside ; ladders etc
not sure it would work with the borders ? does small scale but might not enlarged
Image surrounded by a sea of luscious black deep
string
8 inches

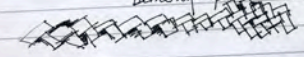

*landscape as parergon
fractured; incomplete view; frigonnier; our expectations of land: parergon or picture?

* Solarplates : Intaglio Printmakers

peatstacks causeways and the remains of crofts linking to the ferry jetty at Berneray

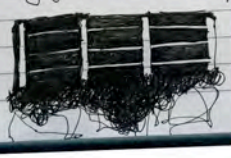
- the mid-air again of the light shimmers white sand below green, sand reflecting the blue of the sky, beautiful field to photograph - colour

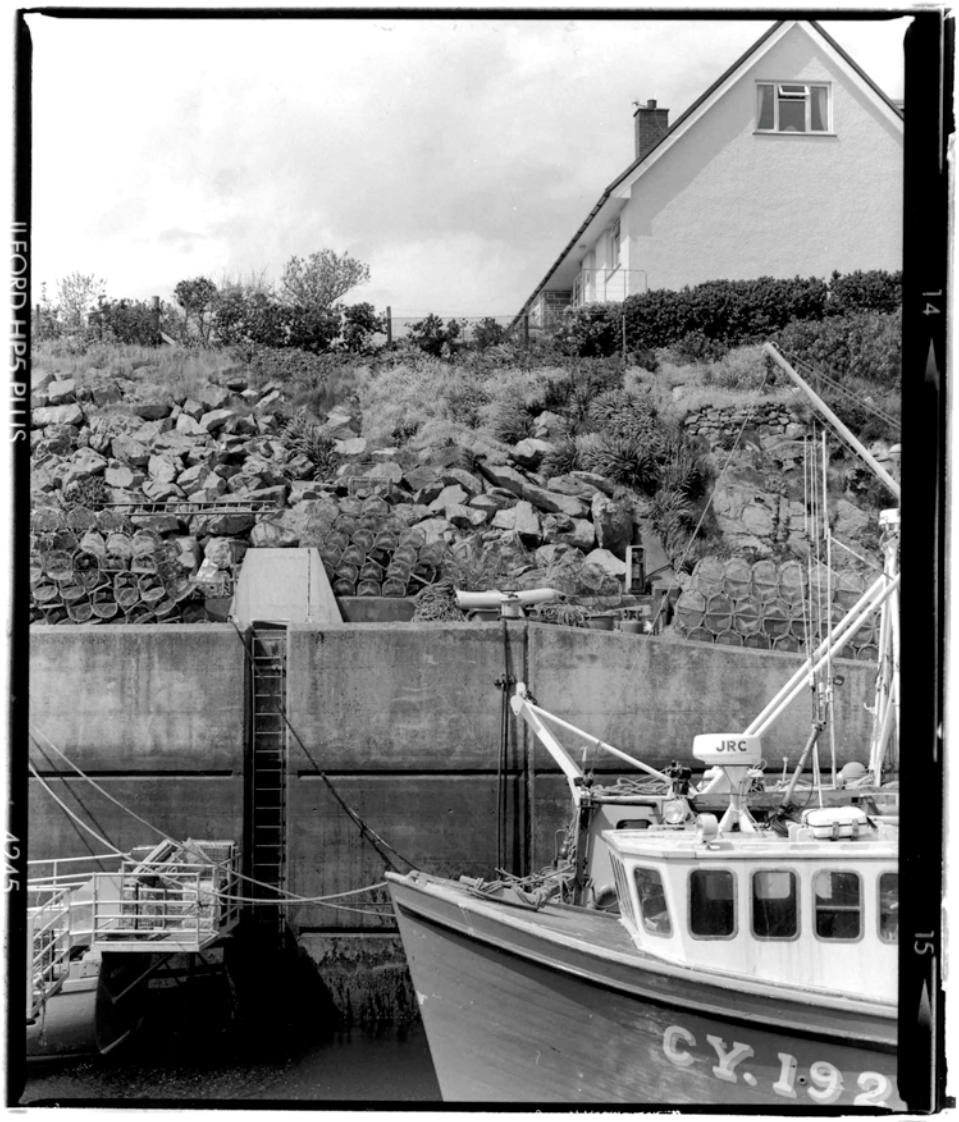
- the dark tide mark — causeways in and around Lochmaddy : photograph Saturday
✓ · peat stacks — light on the cut faces of peat by road to Locheport : morning lights Friday
- the stitched pattern in the large round peat stack — outside Lochmaddy on the road to Berneray: ~~park outside~~ walk there Saturday

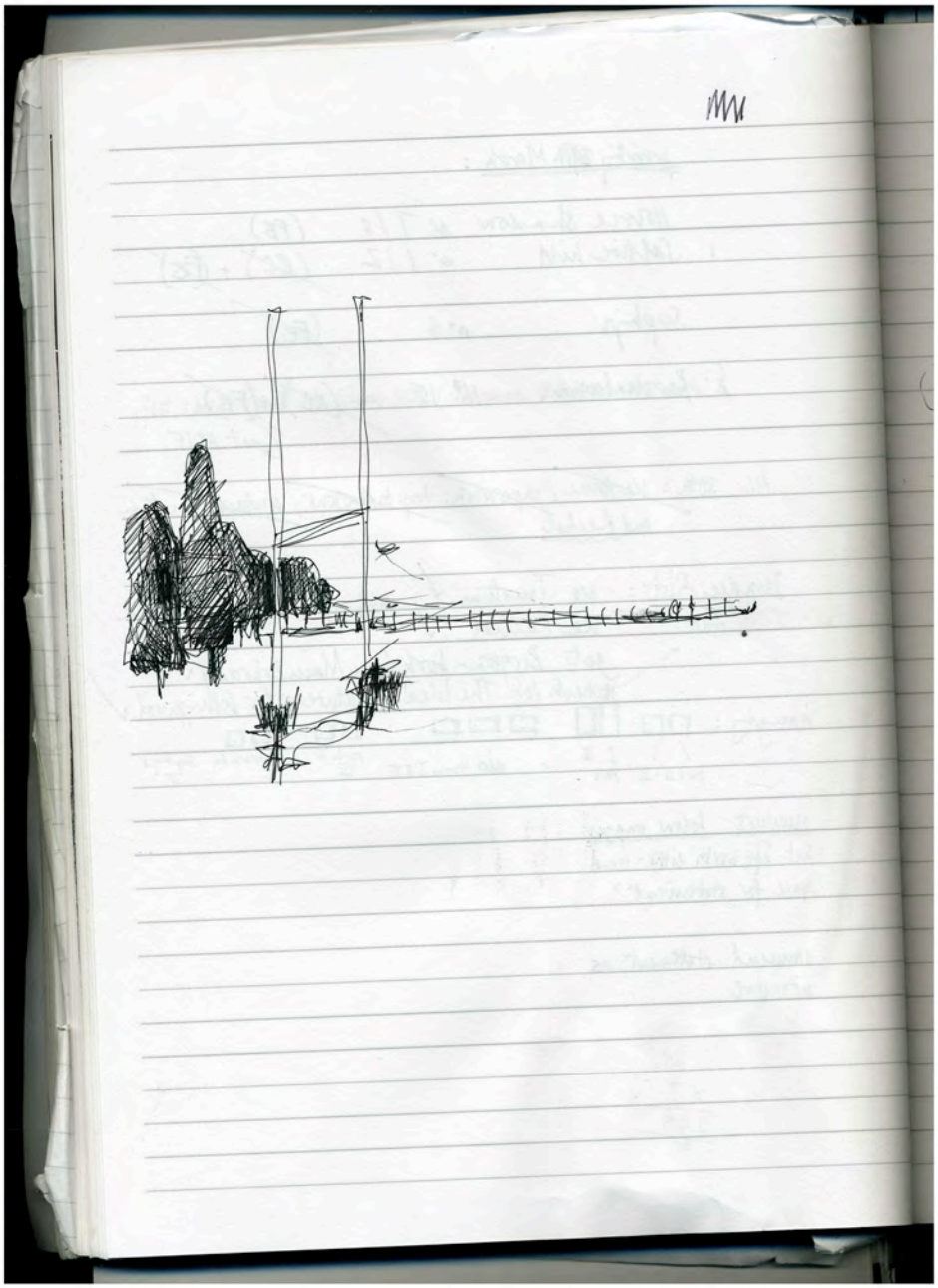


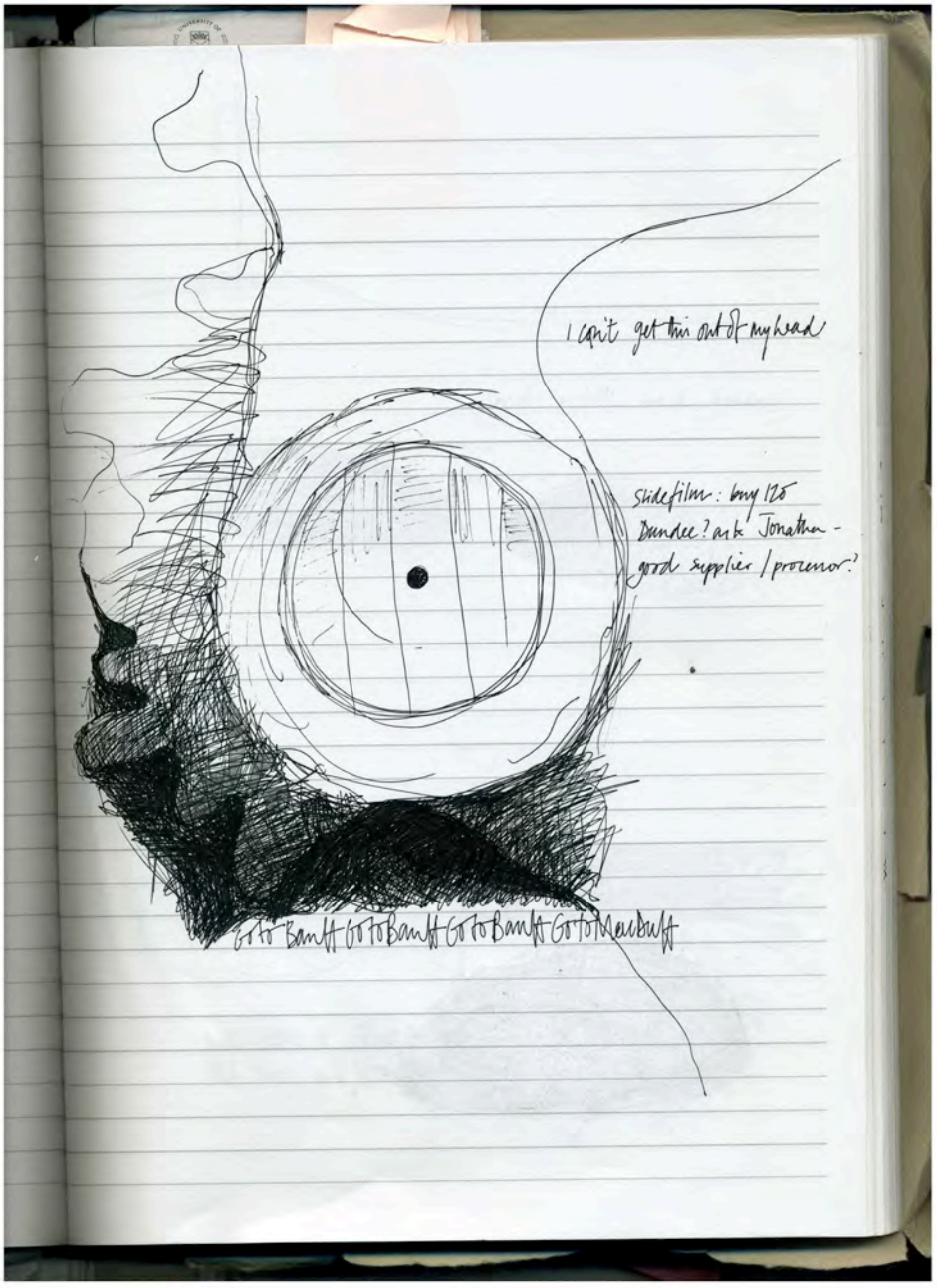
- the small harbour just outside — low tide 8pm (ish) or early morning
- if possible the salmon farms with the ropes coming across the water changing the surface texture of the water.
✓ · loads of stuff on Berneray : Friday afternoon

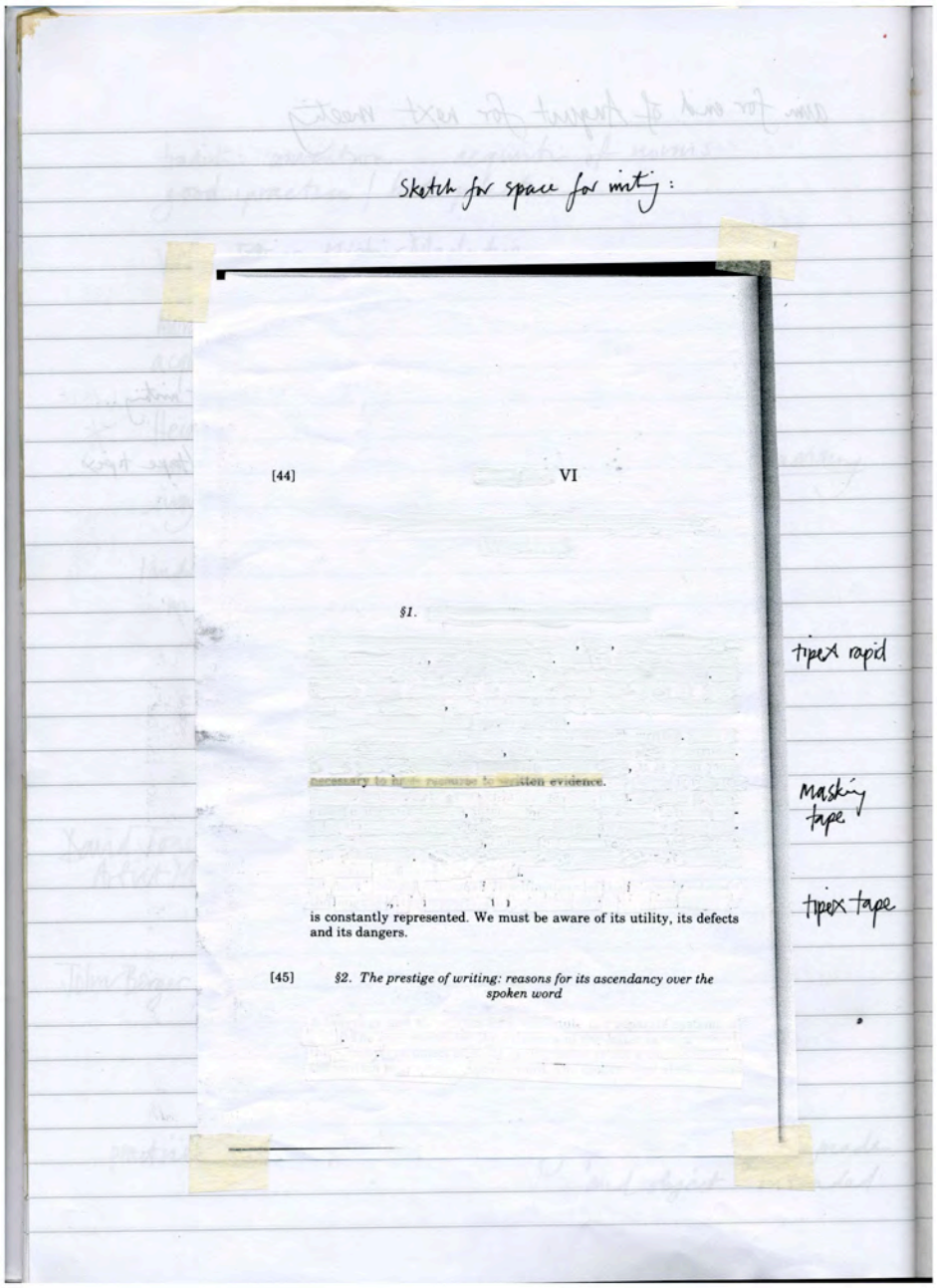
FRIDAY morning go to the bank and buy a map en route to Locheport.

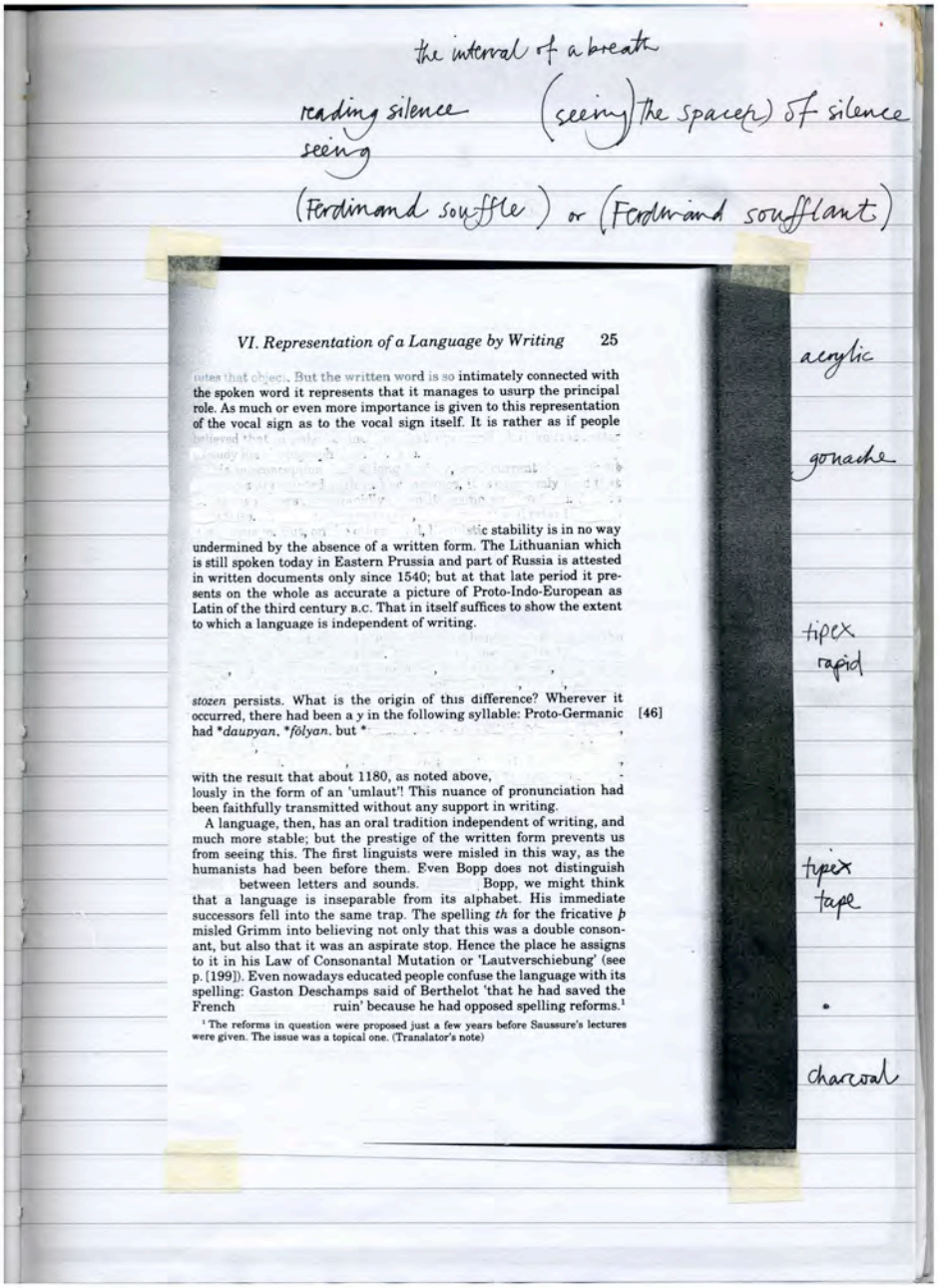



ILFORD HP5 PLUS
400
14
15
JRC
CY. 192




I can't get this out of my head
Slidefilm: buy 120
Dundee? ask Jonathan -
good supplier / processor?
Go to Banff Go to Banff Go to Banff Go to Banff


Sketch for space for writing:
[44] VI
§1.
necessary to
written evidence.
is constantly represented. We must be aware of its utility, its defects and its dangers.
[45] §2. The prestige of writing: reasons for its ascendancy over the spoken word
typex rapid
Masking tape
typex tape



the interval of a breath

reading silence (seeing) the space(s) of silence

seeing

(Ferdinand souffle) or (Ferdinand soufflant)

VI. Representation of a Language by Writing 25

utes that object. But the written word is so intimately connected with the spoken word it represents that it manages to usurp the principal role. As much or even more importance is given to this representation of the vocal sign as to the vocal sign itself. It is rather as if people

c stability is in no way undermined by the absence of a written form. The Lithuanian which is still spoken today in Eastern Prussia and part of Russia is attested in written documents only since 1540; but at that late period it presents on the whole as accurate a picture of Proto-Indo-European as Latin of the third century B.C. That in itself suffices to show the extent to which a language is independent of writing.

stozen persists. What is the origin of this difference? Wherever it occurred, there had been a y in the following syllable: Proto-Germanic had **daupyan*, **fōlyan*, but * [46]

with the result that about 1180, as noted above,
lously in the form of an 'umlaut'! This nuance of pronunciation had been faithfully transmitted without any support in writing.

A language, then, has an oral tradition independent of writing, and much more stable; but the prestige of the written form prevents us from seeing this. The first linguists were misled in this way, as the humanists had been before them. Even Bopp does not distinguish between letters and sounds. Bopp, we might think that a language is inseparable from its alphabet. His immediate successors fell into the same trap. The spelling *th* for the fricative *þ* misled Grimm into believing not only that this was a double consonant, but also that it was an aspirate stop. Hence the place he assigns to it in his Law of Consonantal Mutation or 'Lautverschiebung' (see p. [199]). Even nowadays educated people confuse the language with its spelling: Gaston Deschamps said of Berthelot 'that he had saved the French ruin' because he had opposed spelling reforms.[1]

[1] The reforms in question were proposed just a few years before Saussure's lectures were given. The issue was a topical one. (Translator's note)

acrylic

gouache

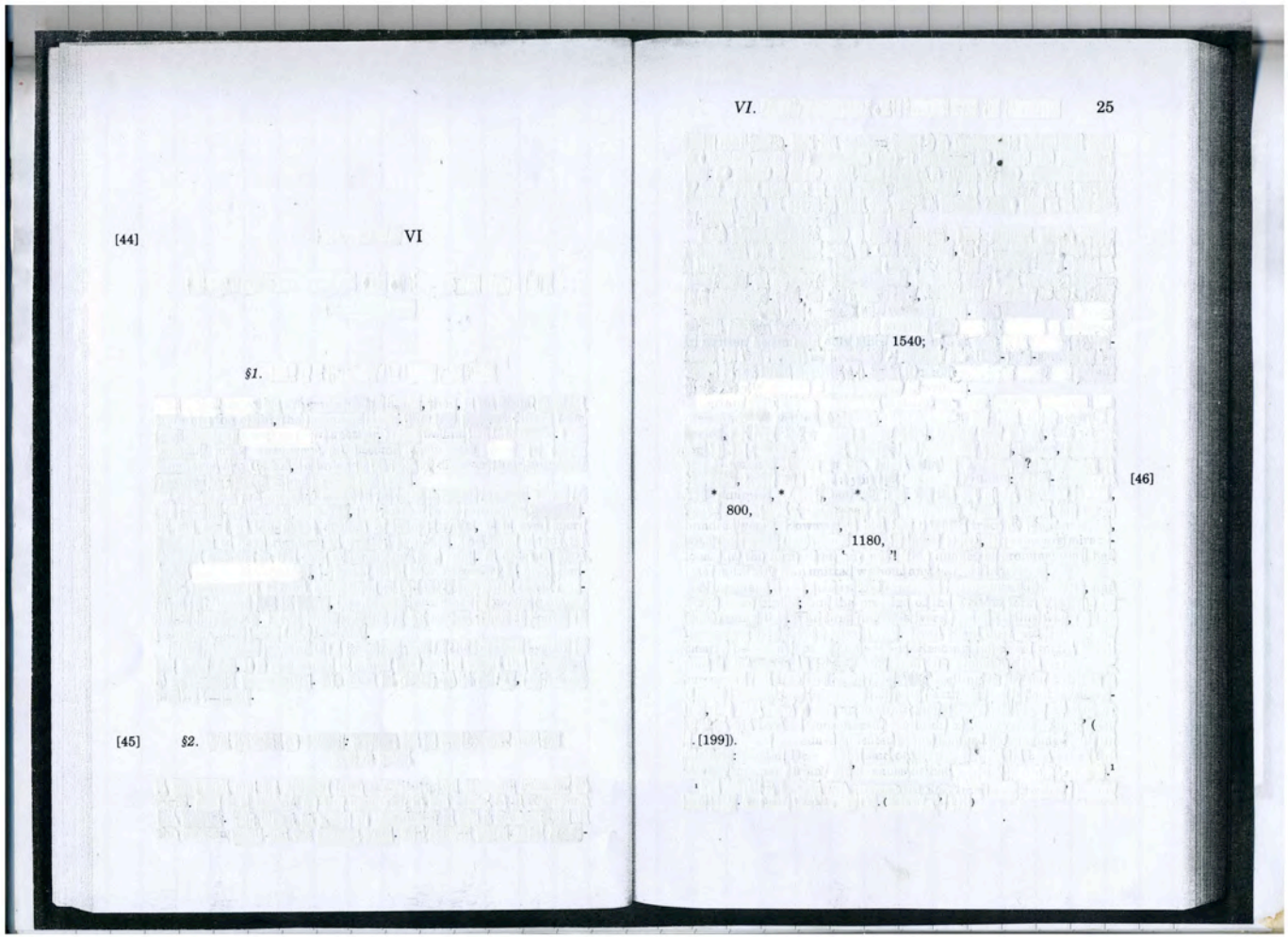
tipex

rapid

tipex

tape

charcoal



[44] VI

§1.

[45] *§2.*

VI. 25

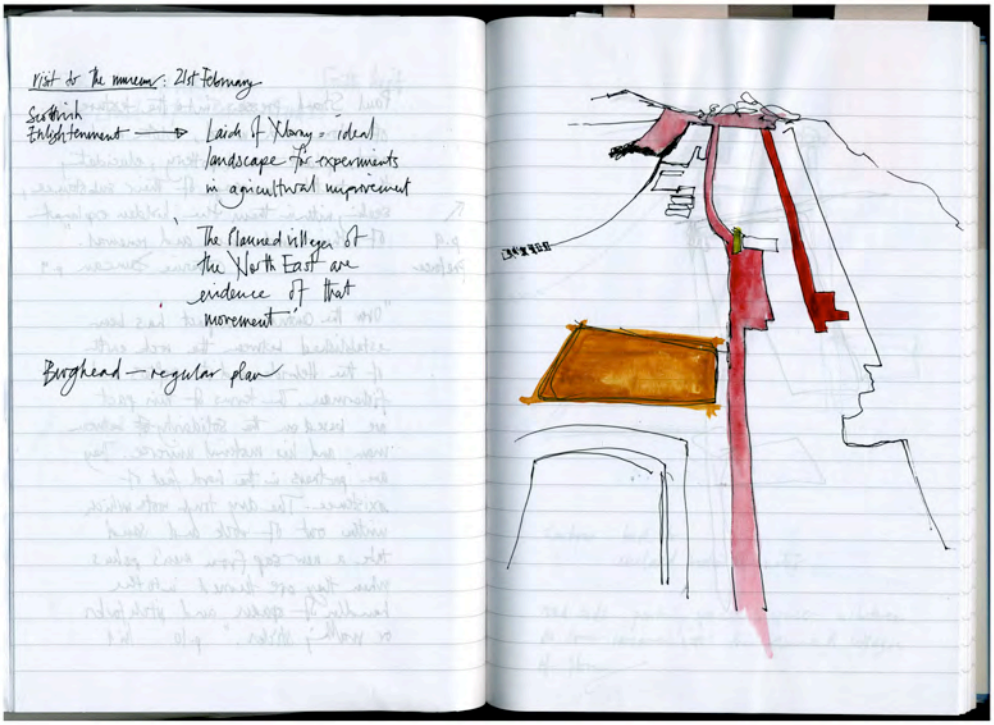
1540;

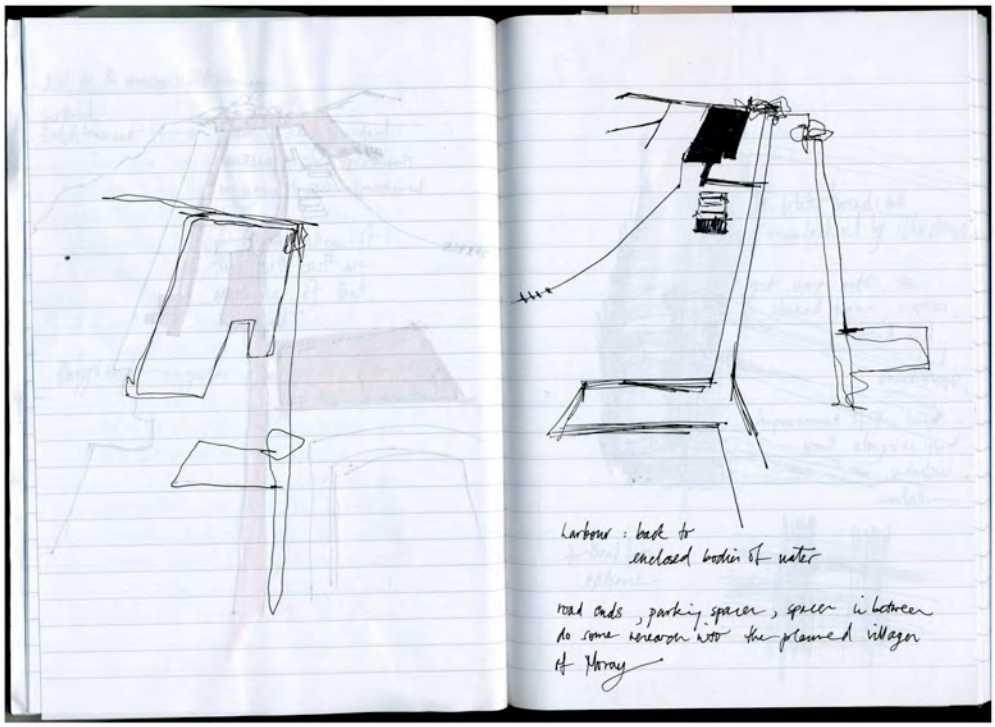
[46]

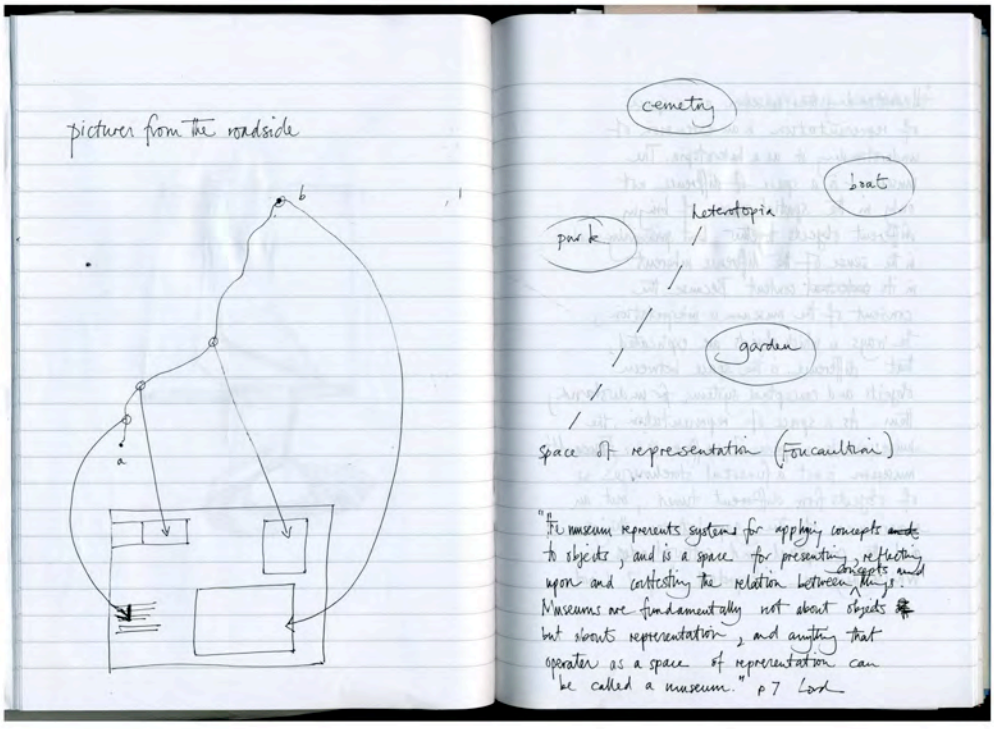
800,

1180,

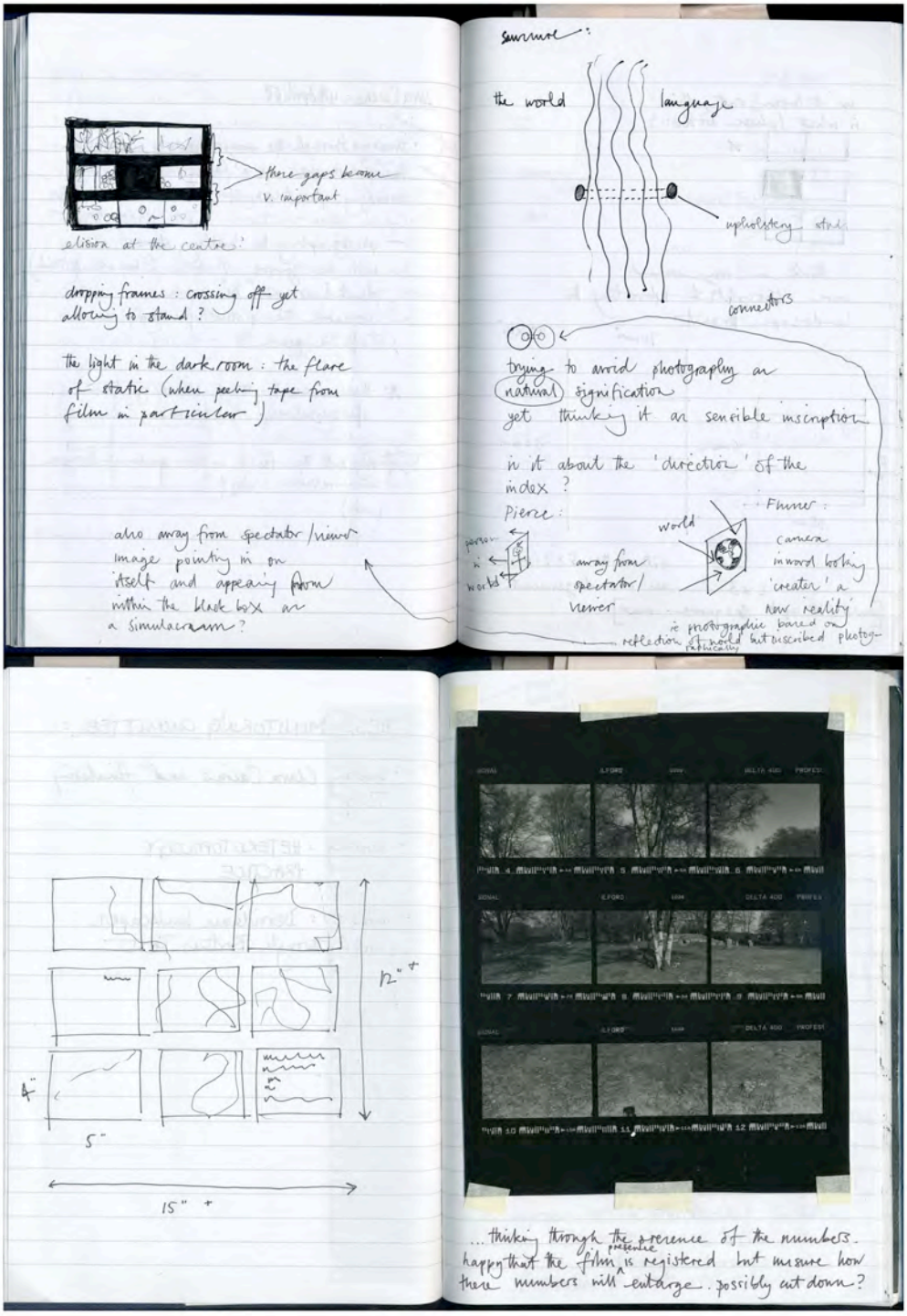
[199]).


visit to the museum: 21st February
Scottish Enlightenment → Laich of Moray - ideal landscape for experiments in agricultural improvement
The planned villages of the North East are evidence of that movement
Burghead — regular plan


Harbour : back to enclosed bodies of water
road ends, parking spaces, spaces in between
do some research into the planned villages of Moray


pictures from the roadside
b
a
cemetery
boat
heterotopia
park
garden
space of representation (Foucaultian)
"[illegible] museum represents systems for applying concepts and to objects, and is a space for presenting, reflecting upon and contesting the relation between concepts and things. Museums are fundamentally not about objects but about representation, and anything that operates as a space of representation can be called a museum." p 7 Lord


the measuring sticks, fence posts and trees all start to echo one another the flat working surface of the earth as a ptolemaic grid but non-Euclidean geometry rather as otherwise localised, localisable truths...
ditch
The waterlogged moat at the site of the bishops' manor.
© Headline Archaeology


these gaps become v. important
elision at the centre?
dropping frames : crossing off yet allowing to stand ?
the light in the dark room : the flare of static (when peeling tape from film in particular)
also away from spectator / viewer
image pointing in on itself and appearing from within the black box as a simulacrum?
summer:
the world
language
upholstery stud
connectors
trying to avoid photographing as natural signification
yet thinking it as sensible inscription
is it about the 'direction' of the index ?
Pierce:
Flusser:
world
camera
in world looking
'creator' a
new reality
away from spectator / viewer
is photographic based on reflection of world but inscribed photog-
12" +
4"
5"
15" +
... thinking through the presence of the numbers. happy that the film is registered but unsure how these numbers will enlarge. possibly cut down?

£177.20 0844 826 1977 Rachel

35 x 6 3,000 ml

120 x 5 2,500 ml

1 + 1 = 5,500

2,750

1100

550

Monday 30th March '09

REVIEW ABSTRACT INSIGHT

- pick out main points for skeleton structure
- read through Chapter 3 cut and paste relevant passages (reflecting on Nicholai observations)
- reread Krauss' Photographic Conditions of Surrealism

Planning —

- SLIDES : NO MORE than 20
- INTERDISCIPLINARITY — dialogical nature of your practice think through how to address this

"Retelling is a way of trying to convey the fact that redaction, translation, reinterpretation, reordering is just as important as any fresh act of so-called individual creation. It is an antiromantic idea in every possible respect, because it is nothing to do with self-expression."

Peter Ackroyd on his reinterpretation of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales

"Thus it is always possible for a text to become new, since the blanks open up its structure to an indefinitely disseminated transformation. The whiteness of the virgin paper, the blankness of the transparent column, reveals more than the neutrality of some medium; it uncovers the space of play or the play of space in which transformations are set off and sequences strung out."

Dissemination p345

track trace spoor

Cornelia Parker fascinated by opposites ...

float mounted on white in white frame

can they emboss the mount board?

don't think it'll work with a bevel mount

- must telephone Jane (photography) to discuss access to the darkroom @ Bolt

situational aesthetics :

"one of the necessary requirements of a situational aesthetics is its emphasis on reading inter-relationally from one element to another, from one context to another and so on. The modes of attention it employs are inevitably discursive and interrogative."
www.circlemakers.org/trick4.html

finishing Chapter 3 : 3,000 words to go

a) do some work on Lacanian basis of Krauss' argument
b) 'signs and the blink of an eye' : photography 10th
c) get the Art Theory book for some background on paregon and inside outside / frame
d) read photogenic section of L'imaginaire
psychology ... Bazin's comments about psychology - image making 'proclivity of the mind to magic'

lens flare ; the frame ; the shutter opening and closing

reclaiming the Barthesian photograph

Flower provides the instrumentality ... the photograph on significant surface.

* confluence of subject and image Barthes' laminated object

* Saussure confluence of signified + signifier

* Derrida : Sign deferred
signified in place of signifier
vs
Krauss : "unitary condition of the moment"
"image of simultaneity"
Surrealism disrupts the unitary condition of the moment by "spacing" — need to question then "invagination of presence" only in terms of Surrealism — what about all images

question the "unitary condition of the moment" and the indexical nature of photographs which is 'the latent 'realism'

its something to do with inside/outside ...

My practice disrupts the unitary moment ... (and the new?)

(Krauss repeated on later)

paper had existed for several thousand years in the west. for several thousand years in China before its adoption in the west. → Chinese primacy not [illegible]

Medieval technology:

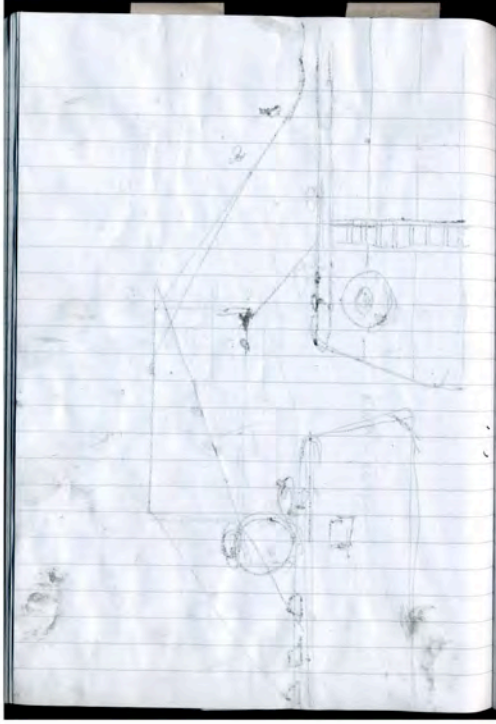
paper originally made from cloth

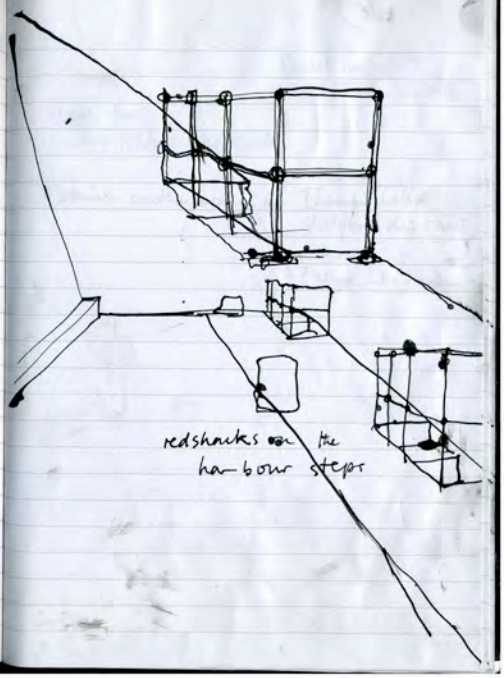
make some investigations into the history of W. papermaking ie the transition from vellum to paper

I note that the view reasserts itself in the Clara Cairns images : see Derrida on deconstruction.

The images which begin to work best for me are the asequential images with the 'errors' in them.

The grid format brings to mind the quote from Rosalind Krauss in the Whitechapel book where she talks about the grid of semiosis : paradigms and juxtapositions of structuralism etc. Beware of the orderly 'ie' structuring of the landscape as text. Your model should be Derridean Grammatology as opposed to the structuralist Barthes. (Return to Barnes + Duncan to flesh this out → i.e. Barthes transition from structuralist to post-structuralist)





redshanks on the harbour steps

harbour : shot with tripod

these images remind me that our eyes are always moving — scanning — that we 'build' pictures / visual representations. relative positions become significant / interesting (Krauss — grid of semiosis)

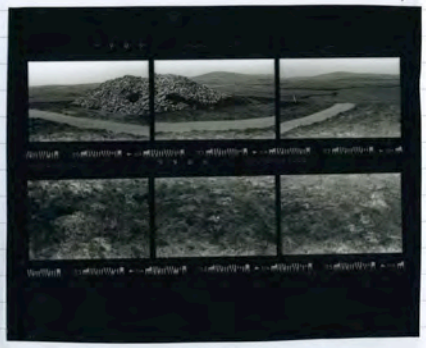
space is made quite uncomfortable with doublings and incongruities the view is constructed / reconstructed.*

deconstruct / reconstruct : see Derrida

* this reconstruction is more productive because it does not hide the camera / viewer ... rather than being implied the presence of the camera is made plain

The Carrying in heavy rain : return and restart (ran out of film - not an intentional frame drop.)

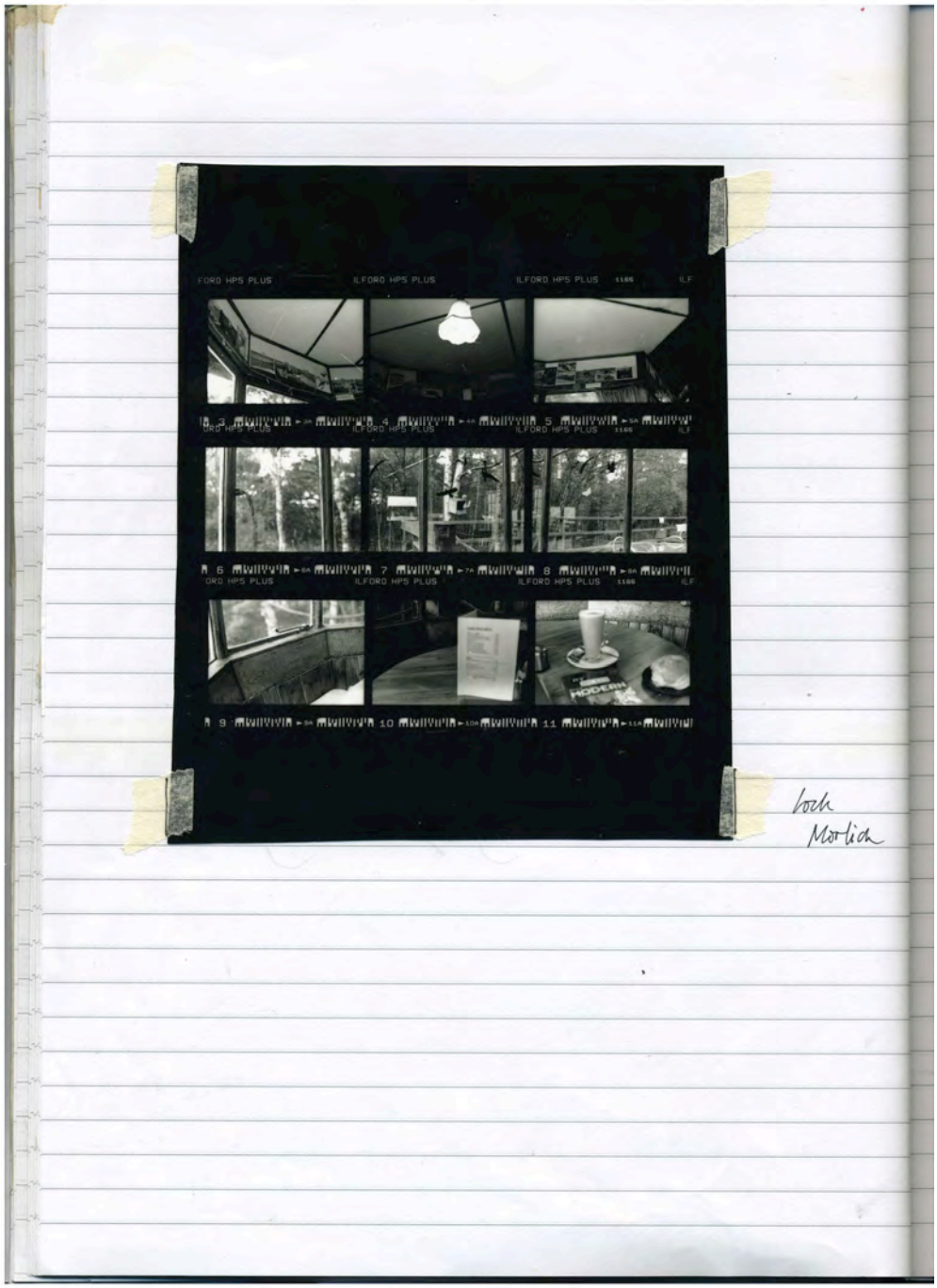
Glen Cheil roadside : image incorporating moving vehicle more successful : light a bit flat in this image but does have some painting potential



Banpa Lagoon inland of North West. Wanted to try to capture the new rather invasive path — quite happy with the image but technical issues with negatives will prevent me from printing. I will print the images of the Gramsons wheelbarrow pipe and the Mac — feel that this framing does something to the flat landscape. Not quite prepared for this...

An early foray into 'the fractured image' tried 'dropping' at frame which worked reasonably well but not sure about final image – changes in light – which I was initially excited about – makes it slightly problematic but I'll leave this open as a possibility.

This was the first image shot in multiple. Initially I worried about the space bending but this only happens in certain circumstances and I've resigned myself to this – However a simple adjustment (parallel) of position mitigates against 'the bend'. This image – shot on tripod →


FORD HPS PLUS
ILFORD HPS PLUS
ILFORD HPS PLUS
HODGEN

chairlift 10
Coire Dèa
Ciste

"

aporia n. seemingly insoluble difficulty; a puzzle or a paradox; a condition of being at a loss what to think.

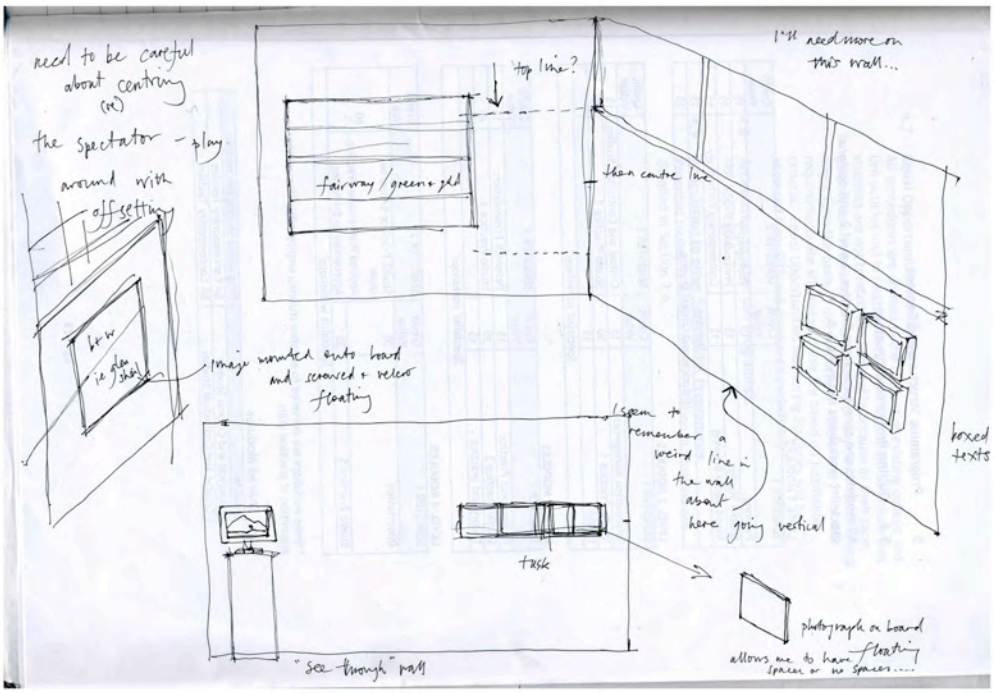
Aristotle suggests that inquiry should take its starting point in a survey of aporias. He did so himself, e.g. in listing fifteen of them in Metaphysics, Book 1-6.

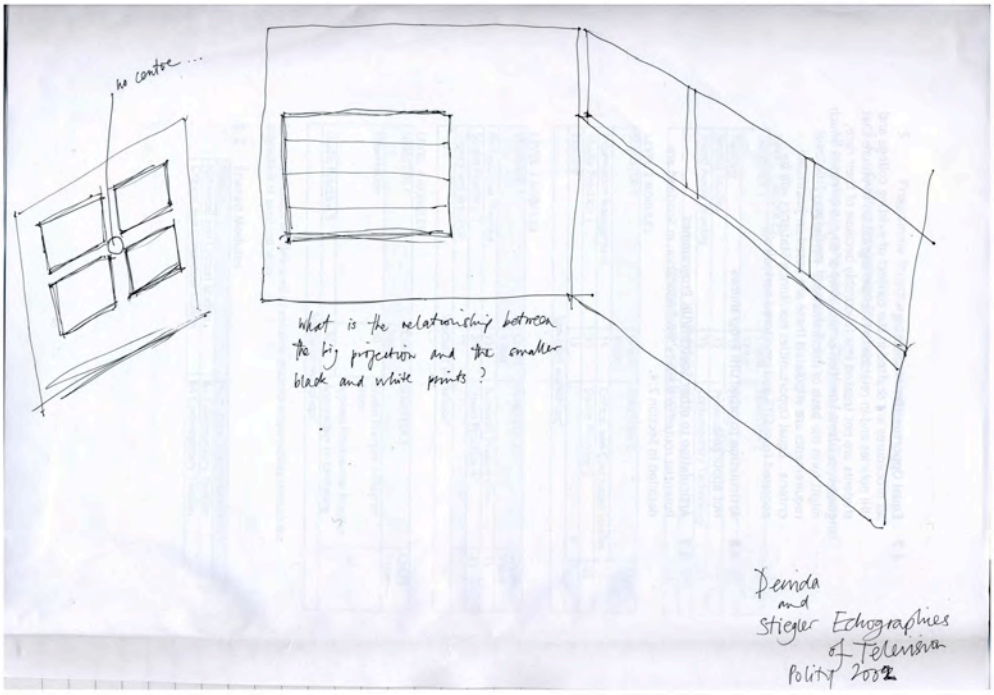
(In rhetoric) feigned or genuine doubt about what to do or say.

The word has come into fashion in recent literary theory to refer to the self-contradictory or self-undermining character of a text. aporetic, aporematic adj. "

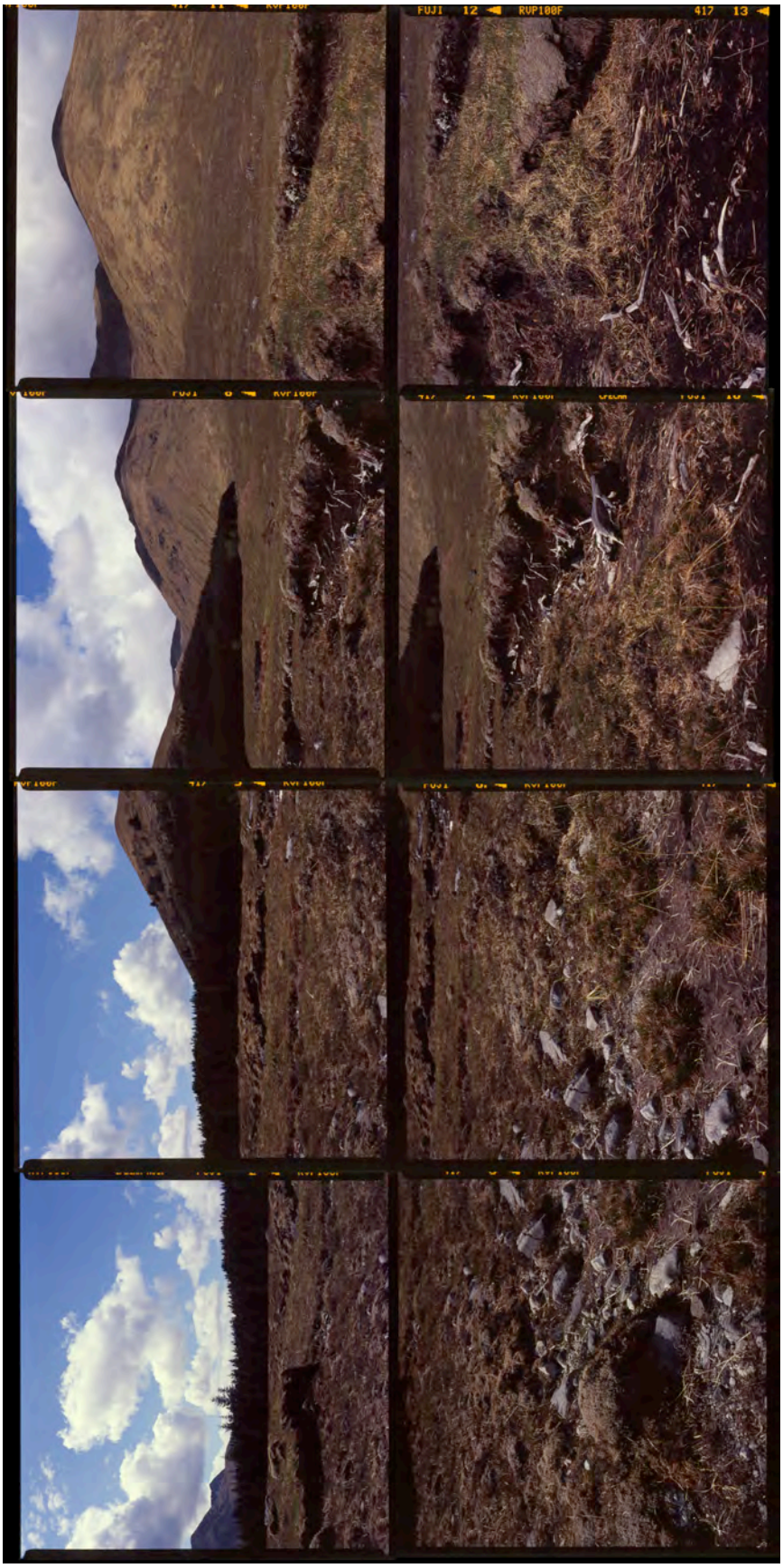
penguin dictionary of philosophy


FERRY ROAD
FERRY ROAD


need to be careful about centring (re) the spectator - play around with offsetting
top line?
fairway / green + qld
I'll need more on this wall...
then centre line
image mounted onto board and screened + relief floating
I seem to remember a weird line in the wall about here going vertical
boxed texts
table
photograph on board
allows me to have floating spaces or no spaces.....
"See through" wall


no centre...
what is the relationship between the big projection and the smaller black and white prints?
Derrida and Stiegler Echographies of Television Polity 2002


RVP100F
FUJI 14
RVP100F
417 15
RVP100F
FUJI 16
RVP100F
417 11
RVP100F
FUJI 12
RVP100F
417 13


FUJI 12 RVP100F 417 13

Conclusions

In this concluding section I intend to briefly summarise the territory covered, in broad terms, whilst simultaneously considering the importance of key conclusions with respect to photography in general and my own practice in particular. As it stands, the drive to rehabilitate the word 'landscape' in the early stages of the thesis turned out to be well founded. The etymological enquiry into landscape yielded useful insights into the conceptual richness latent in the word itself. A range of readings subsequently arose from the enquiry into those earlier etymologies which are absent from the modern dictionary. Landscape, it seems, has a hidden imaginary. The notion that landscapes are humanly manipulated rather than 'natural' is supported by the etymology and also by the writing of a range of theorists, notably John Brinkerhoff Jackson whose work on landscape studies has critically informed this thesis. His understanding of landscape as a *collection of lands*, has been the most constructive, the idea that landscape is a *synthetic space*.

The articulation of landscape as a collection of lands, a collection of synthetic spaces, is both a way of understanding landscape and a visual property of landscape. The landscape as collection is land aggregated, it is, and always has been, the joins in the landscape which interest me. This way of thinking landscape has enabled me to conceive landscape in

terms of Michel Foucault's *heterotopia*. This notion of landscape as other place, or place of otherness, was germane as it opened the possibility of contemplating landscape as a place of difference, indeed I now think of the landscape in difference as placeless.

In addition to the conception of the landscape *heterotopia* as place of difference, we were presented with the idea of the *heterotopia* as an actualised utopia. That is, the *heteropia* comes to stand for something other than itself: the *heterotopia* contradicts the very utopian ideals that it purports to represent. Looking at landscape, especially those putatively natural landscapes of National Parks, through the kaleidoscope of the Foucauldian *heterotopia* showed that the conception of wilderness is a partial reading of landscape which gives rise to a myth of nature. This myth was investigated with reference to Roland Barthes' seminal work 'Myth Today' in relation to the photographic works of Ansel Adams and Stephen Shore. Taking a kaleidoscopic view of *heterotopian* landscapes has enabled me to engage with our own National Park in a more balanced and measured way, which takes cognisance of the fact that it is at once a wilderness *and* a highly managed and manipulated landscape. Raising our awareness of the fractures in landscape, the joins and seams in these synthetic spaces has had the (paradoxical) effect of clarifying my position: I find that I am standing on shifting ground – positionality becomes improbable if not impossible. By way of an example, there is not one Cairngorm National Park, but a place which sustains multiple readings, it is many places.

The notion that the landscape is a place in difference is commensurate with our reading of landscape as text. The idea that landscape is a kind of text, formulated by cultural geographers was taken further than a

metaphoric reading of landscape. Landscape as text, or 'landtext', has come to stand for both the inscribed landscape and our experience of it: landscape as text is productivity. Although I may not have recognised it at the time, the articulation of landscape as text is also consistent with thinking landscape in terms of a system of differences. Roland Barthes' articulation of text, for which he himself used landscape as a metaphor, is taken to be informative of our commerce with landscape. Successive incursions into the landscape, we have shown, are encounters of place in difference.

With reference to Roland Barthes' writing on text, we can think about landscape as movement which does not stop, this as we saw in the course of the thesis has significant implications for the reader, especially with regard to non-durational reading. Not only is the textual landscape constantly mobile, using Barthes' words to describe text, we can call landscape a "methodological field"[379], a field into which the reader enters. Landscape as text is immersive, the reader does not contemplate it from afar but is within it. Even with a distanced view before us, our feet are always on the ground, we are not apart from landscape but part of it, held in difference. This formulation of the textual landscape is resolutely anti-essentialist: landscape is an ever changing inscription, and to think of the humanly inscribed landscape as a lost wilderness is to desire the origin, to fall prey to the mythology of nature in opposition with culture.

Barthes' own scepticism about the power of intentional photographs, built on photography's natural syntagm, has been used as a strategy to undermine his late writing on photography. Barthes' earlier scepticisms about photographic images are elided in *Camera Lucida*, notably their

[379] Ibid. p.942

pseudo natural status which gives the intentional photograph its power of ideological persuasion. However, it is of note that the consistency between these bodies of writing on photography is Barthes' unavowed assertion that the photographic image is "a message without a code".[380] But message it is nonetheless. As we have seen, Barthes argues for the subject-in-the-photograph as presence, an emanation, the photograph certifies of the existence of the subject. However, the work of Vilèm Flusser and Bruno Latour illuminates Barthes' blind spot with respect to the apparatus and industry of photography, calling the whole notion of photographs as natural icons into dispute. Photographic images do not presence the referent, rather, they inscribe the subject photographically. The natural syntagm can therefore be described as a compelling illusion. Rather than natural icons, the photograph is an inscription of synthetic realism.

I have argued that the conception of the subject's being-as-presence in the photograph has a strong parallel in Ferdinand de Saussure's argument which posits the proximity of thought and speech. As such, I argue that theorising photographic images as an extension of this Saussurean paradigm of proximity (i.e. in terms of the photographic touch) forces the photograph into the role of motif for what Jacques Derrida describes as the metaphysics of presence. Throughout the process of writing this thesis I have questioned presence, both in terms of photography and the authorial presence of the writer in the text (or the photographer inside the text landscape). Barthes' contention that the photograph cannot be a sign, that the photographic image is uncoded (we might say that it is motivated in virtue of the syntagm's adherence to the referent) was

[380] Roland Barthes 'The Photographic Message' *Image, Music, Text* Stephen Heath (trans and selected) London: Fontana Press, 1977 p.17

subjected to a critique through reference to the writing of Rosalind Krauss. Krauss' problematic argument requires two formulations of photography, one which ruptures photography's illusion of presence and the other, complicit in this illusion, which is in fact, a *presentation*. In short, Krauss aligns herself as a Barthesean for certain kinds of images and as a Derridean for others. Her thesis on surrealist photography as a "invagination" of presence, a spacing and doubling which constitutes photography as writing (*écriture*) was therefore shown to be characteristic of photographs in general. That is, not only do surrealist photographs write the world, so too do all photographs. In this regard, this thesis does not seek to differentiate different *kinds* of photography. The practice of photography *per se* writes the world and our awareness of this may be foregrounded or not, dependent upon the use to which we put photographic images. That is to say, our commerce with photographs can be characterised by a wilful ignorance of their illusions, which Krauss argues is deprived in the case of surrealist images. However, if photographs in general belong to a system of difference through spacing, doubling and elision, photography is a practice of writing. But not only in the grid images which were analysed in chapter three, but also in singular images: the lens and the shutter open difference. Further still, the gap between the negative and the print sets in motion a multiplicity of photographic texts which presses the point that photographs are themselves disseminations of the subject.

The notion of the photographic double which is a non-identical iteration of the same has clear parallels with Derrida's neographism *différance*. The subject, written photographically, is dissociated from itself: the photographic double is continuously deferred, and the space opened between the leaves of the laminated object ensure that the subject

photographed is subject divided, spaced, re-temporalised. Therefore, to think of photography in terms of *physis in différance*, means that the photographic sign is permanently deferred, the photographic signifier never closes on a signified or referent, and photographic images have no hope of presencing the real. The photograph as *physis in différance* therefore operates between absence and presence, between nature and culture: it is sameness in difference.

The sense that photography is a practice of inside/outside has also been considered, with particular reference to the reformulation of photography in Derridean terms. Conceptualising photographs in such a way facilitates a reading of photography which at once accepts the inside/outside binarism as informative, the notion that photographic practice is interventionist – it produces difference, and yet it resists the singular monocular gaze of the camera. *Différance* does not resolve this binarism, rather it produces oppositional paradigms of thought. As *différance* is neither a word nor a concept, it is a *neographism* which elides conceptual definition, that is, it does not provide a definition of the production of oppositional structures, it provides the conditions in which they may be produced. *Différance* ruptures and delays meaning whilst simultaneously acting as a productivity. *Différance* is both the play of text and the play of textuality.

Photography as *physis in différance* is a practice which is part of the world but also transforms our world. The multitude of positions on the world offered by photographs informs our reception of the world/landscape. Photography, I have written, is a gesture of transformation: photographs transform world, world transforms photograph. However, the whole notion that photographic practice writes the world runs counter to Barthes'

thoughts on the inability of the photograph to act as a sign, for Barthes even in his earlier writing on photography, photographs clearly do not transform the world.[381]

In effect, the inside/outside opposition in photography is produced by photography as *physis in différance*: the moment at which the subject's reflection touches the lens difference opens. Thus through the oppositional structuration of photographic images by lens, shutter and frame, we are given images which speak of inside/outside: these are the products of the photographic *parergon*. The *paregonality* of photographic practice has some utility as it allows us to call to attention the fact that in photographic practice elisions are as significant as inclusions. To be at home in a *parergonal* photographic practice is to be mindful of the idea that a body of practice is an assemblage, a sutured text in which the interstices are as significant as what we might traditionally account for by the nomenclature work (*ergon*). Looking briefly at Walter Benjamin I have argued that practice-as-writing stitches together a new world of images, a body of work sutured together by the photographer surgeon, who cuts images from their surroundings. The image world, the body of photowriting, or what I have called *photogrammatology* is assembled, it is built and woven, it too is text: photographs are held in syntactical relation to one another.

Derrida's practice of placing the sign under erasure has been of critical importance in terms of the deferral and delay of meaning. That is, the deferred sign resists, as he writes, philosophy's founding question: what is? The question of being as presence is disrupted, forcing us to think about

[381] Roland Barthes 'The Photographic Message' *Image, Music, Text* Stephen Heath (trans and selected) London: Fontana Press, 1977 p.17

'what is?' in terms of difference. However, as Derrida points out,[382] the sign placed under erasure is still allowed to stand for it still has some utility: it is the very structure of the sign which allows translation to take place. However, without a direct correlation between signifiers in different languages, translation must be thought in terms of transformation. The Derridean sign *sous rature* is of significance for this thesis insofar as it facilitates the very play of meaning previously discussed. In addition, it enables the photographic signifier to be considered as a transformative component in the practice of *photogrammatology*: a translation of the world.

A key question throughout the thesis has been: how should the relation between landtext and *photogrammatology* be articulated? My initial working question was: can my own photographic practice be described as intertextual? I have provided an affirmative answer to this but in the process I have come to realise that intertextuality in Barthes' terms, and textuality in Derrida's is a constant throughout the thesis. From the landscape to photographic practice-as-writing, from the relation between these practices to the relation of the reader to the artwork, (inter)textuality weaves its way throughout. However, I had not reckoned upon one very significant discovery which showed itself through the writings of Cathryn Vasseleu: the role that light has to play in the intertextual relation.

Light is the touch of the intertext and this in turn forced me to re-evaluate the Barthesean 'treasury of rays'. I have therefore conceded that Roland Barthes and Susan Sontag are right when they say that the subject's

[382] Jacques Derrida, *Positions,* Alan Bass (trans), New York; London: Continuum, 2004 p.19

reflection is imprinted[383] upon the photographic materials. Where I diverge from them both significantly is in their contention that the subject-in-the-photograph touches us, the spectator, across time and space. For me this simply does not hold with a synthetic, interventionist account of photography. In short, by taking account of the Latourean and Flusserian arguments regarding the complexity of new objects which are informed by their apparatuses and industries, we cannot reduce the photographic object to a transparent pane through which we feel the touch of the referent. However emotionally compelling this account of photographs is, especially in the face of personal loss, we should not ignore the vast complex that is the photographic industry, even when considering these personal images. Neither must we tolerate an account of photography which allows for different theoretical paradigms for intentional and non-intentional images. However, the photographic touch is of critical importance as it is this which opens difference: the touch opens the lacuna or delay in the image. Without the photographic touch, Krauss' notion of the invaginated presence would make no sense at all.

Light, as we have discussed, is the touch of the intertext, but as I have discovered in the latter stages of the thesis, light opens the text of the landscape. This is not simply in virtue of its role in revealing the texture of the world, anyone who has consciously observed the landscape under a low raking light will know that these conditions throw the texture of the world into low relief. In fact, as Vasseleu shows us, light opens difference: the touch of light on the eye, and by extension on the lens, differences the world. Under the light, the landscape is other than itself, it is sameness

[383] However, the idea of imprint is open to question and has been debated recently in *Photography Theory* James Elkins (ed) New York; London: Routledge, 2007 pp. 146-151. Rather than taking the imprint which, in the Sontagian sense, entails that the photographs retain a vestigae of the subject. I take it to mean simply the point to point correlation of the reflection and the photosensitive surface of the film.

in difference, it offers an experience *repeatable only as difference*. Light is therefore central to this thesis but this has come to my attention *via* my peripheral vision. On many occasions throughout this research project I asked myself: what about light? I chided myself: which photographer of worth is not keenly aware of light's importance? However, in spite of my theoretical inattention, light has insinuated itself quietly to the centre of the project. Light occupies the centre field of the practice, not as a constant, a central pivot which grounds the work, but as difference itself. The centre is groundless and changing, the field before me is always moving: light is both the difference and the mobility of the landscape as text. I have discovered that the role of photography is to chart that difference, to further transform and rewrite landscape.

As we have seen, one can argue that the camera freezes time, its images endure, that is, they have duration. This, in contradistinction with the Barthesean semelfactive reading, which is non-durational, it is momentary and (typically) punctual. The semelfactive reading of landscape, as we have already seen, is repetition in difference. Although it would seem that landscapes and photographs support divergent modes of reading, I argue that photography, taken as a practice of writing, proven during the thesis, produces images which are iterations of difference. As such, we can describe each difference as a punctual image, a moment of difference within the same. Cumulatively then, photographic images provide us with semelfactive rather than durational readings of their subjects, which in this case is landscape. Photographs are differential blinks in the fabric of the same.

The ruptures in the 'unified' photographic moment, instigated by a photographic practice taken to be a form of writing, supports the

assertion that a body of photographic practice is diachronic. Although photographs appear to be frozen, that is synchronous occurrences in which the subject and its image are self-identical, the thesis of the subject in difference, offers a reading of photographic practice as historical insofar as it transects time. As far as the so called photographic moment is concerned (the duration of the opening of the shutter which is ruptured by *photogrammatology*), the photographer is excluded. Indeed, at the precise moment at which authorial control is desired, the apparatus conspires to overwrite the photographer's vision. But the photographer's blindness in the face of the photographic moment can be productive, indeed generative, in the sense that it facilitates a loss of control over the subject. This is further emphasised by my use of the camera to build pictures, unsighted, blindly assembling them on the negative which inscribes doublings and incongruities into the image. The view is patiently deconstructed only to insinuate itself once again. As Derrida states when interviewed for the DVD *Derrida*, a condition of deconstruction is that it may be at work on the periphery:

> part of the system to be deconstructed already at work not at the centre but in an eccentric centre – participating in the construction of what it threatens to deconstruct[384]

However, the view reconstructed is of a different order, it is an assemblage of glances rather than a full frontal gaze.

It is important to recall that writing, *écriture*, *différance,* text are productivity. Text in its most radical sense does not exist, it is not a product but is a site or space of productivity: text is produced relationally.

[384] Jacques Derrida interviewed in *Derrida* Directed by Kirby Dick, Amy Ziering Kofman, 2006

As such, Barthes' 'Theory of the Text' investigates similar territory to Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* and, as we saw in the final written chapter, this can be applied to the gallery. Returning momentarily to the notion of the *parergon*, we explored the idea that the gallery articulates the work, that is, it needs the extrinsic, the gallery wall, in order for the intrinsic to be read as such. Without its context of presentation, the work fails to have a unified interiority. However, paradoxically the work cannot be an aesthetic unity for, as we saw earlier, Derrida contends that the inside and the outside are not pure, rather each is the product of the *parergon*. The *ergon* is completed, supplemented by the *parergon*, which is to say that without the extrinsic, the work is lacking. The gallery supplements the lack in the work and acts as a *parergon* giving rise to the illusion of the pure interiority of the *ergon*/work. Without the relational space of the gallery, the work cannot be articulated, it cannot be finished or complete. However, this completion only constitutes a momentary rest, for the exhibition will be disassembled in due course, the text of practice rewritten:

> Thus it is always possible for a text to become new, since the blanks open up its structure to an indefinitely disseminated transformation. The whiteness of the virgin paper, the blankness of the transparent column, reveals more than the neutrality of some medium; it uncovers the space of play or the play of space in which transformations are set off and sequences strung out.[385]

The hanging and re-hanging of work means that the body of photography, a product of writing: text, is opened by the white wall of the gallery. Far from being a neutral space, the gallery is relational, and for

[385] Jacques Derrida *Dissemination* Barbara Johnson (trans) New York; London: Continuum, 2004 p.345

theorists such as Bourriaud, it is social. Thus the white interstitial space between and around the work, to borrow Derrida's words, "uncovers the space of play and the play of space in which transformations are set off and sequences are strung out."[386] That is to say, the whiteness of the gallery, like the white sheet of paper, is not invisible, neutral or benign. Rather, it discloses the play of space in which the work is set in motion. The photographer at play in the world and at play in the gallery is a "syntaxer"[387].

In my role as a photographer, it is essential that the effects of the frame are given due consideration. The gallery wall, the elisions of the world all require to be taken as part of the text, part of its "indefinitely disseminated transformation."[388] If we recall what Derrida writes in *The Truth in Painting*:

> No "theory", no "practice", no "theoretical practice" can intervene effectively in this field if it does not weigh up and bear on the frame…at the invisible limit to…the interiority of meaning…and…all the empiricisms of the extrinsic which, incapable of either seeing or reading, miss the question completely.[389]

In this sense practice itself is placed under erasure insofar as we take an artist/photographer to have *a* practice. A more productive means of expressing this would be to say that the photographer is in practice, akin to Kristeva's articulation of the subject in process. Whilst this research project is both theoretical and practical, following Derrida it tries not to

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[386] Ibid.
[387] Stephane Mallarmé cited by Jacques Derrida *Dissemination* Barbara Johnson (trans) New York; London: Continuum, 2004 p.194
[388] Jacques Derrida *Dissemination* Barbara Johnson (trans) New York; London: Continuum, 2004 p.345
[389] Jacques Derrida *The Truth in Painting* Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod (trans) Chicago Ill.; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987 p.61

observe and analyse practice from afar but to undertake this endeavour both from within practice and crucially within theory. The theoretical has not been utilised as a validation or decoding of practice, rather the theoretical works encountered during the writing of the thesis have functioned as discursive spaces which have been inhabited. Not, in a "homely" way but, especially in the case of Derrida, spaces which destabilise one's limited thought.

The pursuit of a practice led research project has not been without its challenges. But for all the seemingly unsystematic play, a cogency has emerged. In terms of a contribution to knowledge my approach may appear to have its drawbacks: inevitably the pursuit of a Derridean account of photography encourages a slippery engagement with meaning, which may be misinterpreted as a looseness of intention. However, rather than seeking to formulate an epistemic framework within which to situate the thesis, I have taken the thesis to be a discursive practice in a discursive space. Notwithstanding the general scepticism of this anti-essential, constructivist approach, localised contributions to (the construction of) knowledge can be demonstrated. Notably, the writings of Jacques Derrida provide a way of thinking photography in terms of the expanded field of writing. Therefore, Derrida's work acts as a force for productivity within the thesis, which some argue has been lacking in the visual arts thus far. As Robin Marriner points out in *Companion to Art Theory*, Derrida's influence on the visual arts has not been significant:

> References to Derrida are much rarer…and for the most part to be found in journals that, though concerned with art, are somewhat peripheral to the making of contemporary culture.[390]

Admittedly difficult to read, Derrida's work has proven to have productive consequences for my thinking and practice. He has enabled me to engage with the deconstruction of the view photographically, whilst reminding me that deconstruction is always at work. However, as we have just seen, the re-constructed view is a re-viewing, view re-assembled, an articulation of differential blinks. Barthes' words which follow are Derridean in tenor:

> The infinity of the signifier refers not to some idea of the ineffable (the unnameable signified) but to that of a playing; the generation of the perpetual signifier…in the field of the text…is realized…according to a serial movement of disconnections, overlappings and variations.[391]

In the thorny territory of the "what" of this practice-led thesis, *différance*, *écriture*, *grammatology*, the expanded field of writing, have enabled me to concentrate as much on process as on content. This has alerted me to far subtler readings of photography than I ever hoped to achieve, and those readings were emergent, products themselves of the discursive space of the thesis. The sign, cleaved by Derrida, sets off a play of meaning which frustrates closure. This is far from problematic for the visual practitioner as it enables one's (space of) practice to be a place of encounter in which partial meanings are constructed. There is no proper

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[390] Robin Marriner 'Derrida and the Parergon' in *A Companion to Art Theory* eds Paul Smith and Carolyn Wilde Malden, Mass.;Oxford: Blackwell, 2002 p.349

[391] Roland Barthes 'From Work to Text' in *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds), Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1998 p.943

reading, only numerous readings, equally valid and mobile in the gallery space. I play in the differential gap within the sign. And the textual space of the gallery is the space of the encounter with the Other (*khora*).

The resolutely Derridean theorisation of *photogrammatology* has enabled me to test some long held intuitions about photographic practice. In the expanded field of writing I have been able to rigorously explore something otherwise inexpressible: the in-between. Derrida and Saussure alert us to difference, inaudible, invisible, yet a critical structuration of experience and meaning. The thesis also occupies a space between disciplines: photography and philosophy; theory and practice; in investigating these spaces between, the work is interdisciplinary in the strongest terms. I find myself to be a "hybrid" in the Latourean sense, which one might argue is the most effective role to play in the occupation of academic interstitial spaces. The artwork in the gallery asks the viewer to see in-between. The images are not difference itself but articulate difference which is intangible. Difference is a lacuna between the works which the viewer is asked to imagine.

Photogrammatology is also a productivity and a space from within which it is critiqued. As Barthes demonstrates, text is not analysed from the outside, but from within. Photography is therefore to be researched from inside of its own practice. In terms of this thesis, photography is not a subject dispassionately investigated but a textual process in which the play of research has unfolded. By working from the inside of photography's text, imbricated within it, (whilst bearing in mind the problematic of the inside/outside relation) I have avoided two kinds of academic oversight. Firstly, the potential myopia of single discipline study has been avoided by a dialogical encounter between disciplines, and

secondly, I have avoided what we saw Derrida describe earlier as "the empiricisms of the extrinsic"[392] which render one unable to see the very question at hand.

In the ceaseless play of signifiers ('*signifiance*') the reader loses command of the text, the reader is *subjected* to text. This sense of loss and disorientation in a *scriptable* rather than *lisable* text resonates strongly with my own experiences of landscape. The light on the land is transformative, it illuminates the text of the landscape in difference. And the landscape, always, already the difference of itself, articulates the textual sublime. Additionally, the photographic writing of landscape translates this text: it is the double, *unheimlich*. These photographic texts literally disseminate landscape, they are the dissemination of landscape in difference. In the land light others land's shape, landscape is sameness in difference, yet *déja lu*, it is always, already read. The translations of the photograph articulate landscape as textual sublime, under the touch of light and the photographic inscription it is the eternal difference of itself. The photographer is within the field of the text and the body of work is assembled "according to a serial movement of disconnections, overlappings and variations."[393] This thesis has opened new possibilities in practice which means that this work is as much as starting point as it is a conclusion. In a sense, I have not found a clear definition of my practice, but I have discovered much more: a productive place in which to play.

[392] Jacques Derrida *The Truth in Painting* Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod (trans) Chicago Ill.; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987 p.61
[393] Ibid.

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List of Illustrations

This section remains deliberately unmediated by written text.